

Information, Education, Discussion Bulletin  
**In Defense of Marxism**

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# The Fourth International



*Faces the Turn of the Century*

**Also: What is the Meaning of the Recent Events in Moscow?**

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

**The Israeli-PLO Accords**

by Michael Steven Smith

**Labor Party Advocates Gather in Chicago**

by David Riehle

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# Who We Are

*Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* is published by an independent collective of U.S. socialists who are in fraternal solidarity with the Fourth International, a worldwide organization of revolutionary socialists.

Supporters of this magazine may be involved in different socialist groups and/or in a broad range of working class struggles and protest movements in the U.S. These include unions and other labor organizations, women's rights groups, antiracist organizations, coalitions opposed to U.S. military intervention, gay and lesbian rights campaigns, civil liberties and human rights efforts. We support similar activities in all countries and participate in the global struggle of working people and their allies. Many of our activities are advanced through collaboration with other supporters of the Fourth International in countries around the world.

What we have in common is our commitment to the Fourth International's critical-minded and revolutionary Marxism, which in the twentieth century is represented by such figures as V.I. Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, and Leon Trotsky. We also identify with the tradition of American Trotskyism represented by James P. Cannon and others. We favor the creation of a revolutionary working-class party, which can only emerge through the conscious efforts of many who are involved in the struggles of working people and the oppressed and who are dedicated to revolutionary socialist perspectives.

Through this magazine we seek to clarify the history, theory and program of the Fourth International and the American Trotskyist tradition, discussing their application to the class struggle internationally and here in the United States. This vital task must be undertaken if we want to forge a political party in this country capable of bringing an end to the domination of the U.S. imperialist ruling class, establishing a working people's democracy and socialist society based on human need instead of private greed, in which the free development of each person becomes possible.

*Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* is independent of any political organization. Not all U.S. revolutionaries who identify with the Fourth International are in a common organization. Not all of them participate in the publication of this journal. Supporters of this magazine are committed to comradely discussion and debate as well as practical political cooperation which can facilitate eventual organizational unity of all Fourth Internationalists in the United States. At the same time, we want to help promote a broad recomposition of a class-conscious working class movement and, within this, a revolutionary socialist regroupment, in which perspectives of revolutionary Marxism, the Fourth International, and American Trotskyism will play a vital role.

*Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* will publish materials generally consistent with these perspectives, although it will seek to offer *discussion articles* providing different points of view within the revolutionary socialist spectrum. Signed articles do not necessarily express the views of anyone other than the author.

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# What is the Meaning of the Recent Events in Moscow?

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

The events in Russia during the final days of September and early October opened a new phase of the class struggle in the former Soviet Union.

Yeltsin's move to dissolve not only the Russian parliament but all the local governing councils throughout Russia, as well as the Supreme Court, is clearly laying the basis for a fundamental new round of economic assaults on the working-class population. This is a signal that Yeltsin is preparing to try to do what he has been unable to do so far — forcibly impose the economic reforms dictated by foreign imperialist lending institutions in an attempt to open up the faucet of imperialist funds.

What began during the Gorbachev era as an effort to introduce certain market mechanisms and institute certain democratic reforms as a means for injecting new energy, technology, and capital into the stagnating, bureaucratically run economy, took on a dynamic of its own.

## The Attack of the Market Reforms

After modest concessions toward market mechanisms failed to win any significant imperialist assistance, the Kremlin made even more concessions and moved toward imposing austerity measures and dismantling the planned economy altogether in a vain effort to appease imperialism. This only caused further dislocations and progressive economic collapse. It also provided openings to legitimize "privatization" by well-placed bureaucrats and black-marketeers of any of the national resources they could get their hands on. This progressively tilted the social weight in the ruling caste more and more toward adopting capitalism and "private ownership" as their preferred system.

On the eve of the attempted August coup, in the summer of 1991, despite a major overture to a meeting of the G-7 industrialized nations by the Gorbachev government, it became clear that the chief imperialist lenders were totally unsatisfied with the progress of market reforms in the former USSR. It also became clear that until the imperialist lenders were satisfied, they remained unwilling to advance the tens of billions of dollars that many economists predicted would be necessary to help rejuvenate the faltering social and economic institutions in the Soviet Union.

In the autumn of 1991, after Yeltsin and the clique around him who overtly advocated the restoration of capitalism defeated the coup attempt by more cautious sections of the Stalinist bureaucracy, he was able — with parliament's blessing — to position himself well for a direct assault toward deeper market-oriented reforms.

However, he ran head on into two obstacles:

First, the direct assault he had in mind meant a full-fledged attack on the living standards of the masses he had so demagogically claimed to represent. The assault would, thus, seriously undermine his authority.

Second, when Yeltsin took power, he immediately undermined his own domain. He took advantage of the coup attempt to ban the Communist Party, a bastion of his more cautious rivals whose property he and those around him wanted for their own purposes. By doing this, he eliminated the very political institution that had held the USSR together against the popular forces from below who wanted independence. The 10 republics still adhering to the USSR with Russia very quickly declared independence and the Soviet Union collapsed.

## The Tables Get Turned

Alarmed imperialist creditors, who were owed over \$80 billion by the former USSR, began by the final weeks of 1991 to impose strict conditions on the debtors of the former republics, with the Kremlin — now Russian — assuming the bulk of the responsibility for repayment. Imperialism was now demanding money from the Kremlin instead of vice versa and its terms were austere. From then on, the IMF began to dictate what the Russian government must do.

## Editor's Note

A focus of this special double issue of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* is "Building the Fourth International and the World Revolutionary Movement." Revolutionary internationalism is a necessity for those who would advance the interests of workers and the oppressed and replace capitalism with socialist democracy. Capitalism is a global system and can only be replaced on an international scale — socialism is impossible in a world dominated by imperialism.

An essential force in this regard is the Fourth International, which is dealt with in this issue by Bill Onasch, Paul Le Blanc, James P. Cannon, and Leon Trotsky (author of the Fourth International's "Transitional Program"). One of the vital roles of the Fourth International is to draw together thoughtful activists from different countries to develop such valuable analyses as the one we are pleased to reproduce here, on women in today's global economy, drafted by Heather Dashner, Carol McAllister, and Eva Nikell.

The task of building a world revolutionary movement involves more than the Fourth Interna-

This was demonstrated most graphically by the "shock therapy" imposed by Yeltsin in January 1992, measures that no previous "reformers" had dared to impose. By January 1992, however, the circle of those in Russia who were positioned to enrich themselves at popular expense had widened and these devastating measures found enthusiastic defenders in high places.

The effects of these policies — the lifting of prices and the privatization drive — have been described previously in the pages of *BIDOM*. Suffice it to say that the overwhelming majority of the working population has been catapulted into poverty, with rapid increases in malnutrition, infant mortality rates, overall mortality rates, epidemics, disease, and want. Industrial production in October 1993 had fallen 40 percent below production in October 1990. The shelves in the stores were no longer empty; they were now filled with goods that ordinary people simply could not afford to buy.

By the end of 1992, as conditions worsened and the government was beginning to cut deeper into subsidies to various industries, the parliament, many of whose deputies represent factory and enterprise directors, began to object to the pace and depth of the changes and began to resist fully implementing measures Yeltsin proposed. They did not pull back in revulsion at the consequences their actions would have on the workers, but only began to fear that in some ways their own feeding trough might be taken away if the policies continued to be implemented unchecked.

## The Build-up to the Standoff

In December 1992 and again in April 1993, the conflict within the ruling caste emerged as a

tional. In South Africa, the Workers Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA) is a vital element in the revolutionary struggle, as indicated by Neville Alexander and Tom Ranuga. In Russia, in the Middle East, in Japan, in Somalia and Haiti, in Guatemala and Nicaragua, and in Cuba, difficult struggles are in progress, which engage the attention and energies of a variety of forces — as can be seen from a number of articles in this issue.

It is especially important to give attention to the development of organizations of class-conscious workers and revolutionary socialists in our own country. The comradely polemic by Peter Johnson — part of an ongoing debate initiated by Paul Le Blanc's "Notes on Building a Revolutionary Party in the United States" — speaks to this question. Saladin Muhammad and Dave Riehle, focusing on specifics of the class struggle in the U.S. and on efforts to lay groundwork for a mass labor party, suggest practical advances in what may be vital U.S. contributions to building the world revolutionary movement.

public standoff between Yeltsin and his former allies in the parliament over who was going to call the shots. Yeltsin used the results of the much publicized referendum on his policies in late April 1993 to claim a popular mandate to continue imposing his "reform" program.

However, of the 58 percent of the eligible voters who turned out to vote, only about 51 percent actually expressed support for his policies. That represented less than 30 percent of the eligible voters — hardly an overwhelming mandate. Moreover, Yeltsin "won" some of that support by promising benefits he never intended to deliver.

Throughout the summer of 1993, he tried to push through measures that would win him IMF support. These included lifting the ceiling on coal prices and cutting subsidies to the coal industry, increasing the price of natural gas by seven times, doubling the primary lending rate of the Central Bank to 170 percent, declaring valueless all currency that was issued before January 1, 1993, to cut inflation (!) and stabilize the ruble (!!), formulating a budget with a deficit that was just 12 percent of the projected GNP (the IMF "target" for Russia is 5 percent), and advancing ever more liberal privatization schemes.

Although the IMF did advance half of the \$3 billion in loans it promised in 1993, the second half and a \$6 billion ruble-stabilization fund were withheld. This much-sought-after ruble stabilization fund will be used to buy up rubles — close to 6 trillion of them — and thus, in theory, help roll back inflation.

In mid-July, an IMF spokesman said that the IMF was demanding "deeper cuts" in the budget and felt that Russia "hadn't turned the corner yet." The government had until October 1 to meet IMF demands.

Then parliament, in July — while Yeltsin was on vacation — rejected the government's budget in favor of its own, which showed a deficit that was 25 percent of the projected GNP. This deficit budget was a "naughty" move (from

Yeltsin's point of view). It restored some of the spending cuts and low-interest credits that Yeltsin's budget had cut out, placed its own limits on some foreign investors (the Yeltsin government this year introduced some such limits), promised to keep fuel prices down, suspended important aspects of Yeltsin's privatization plan, and threatened to seriously restrict the operations of foreign banks.

Although Yeltsin tried to veto or ignore these parliamentary measures, parliamentary opposition was clearly an obstacle to meeting the IMF demands and deadlines.

On September 19, the IMF announced its decision to delay a \$1.5 billion loan to Russia "because of Moscow's failure to cut its inflation rate and carry out other promised reforms" (*New York Times*, September 20, 1993).

### The "Big Boys" Step In

The same article reported ominously that "United States and [IMF] officials were encouraged that the Russian Government has shown what they see as a stepped-up commitment to reform over the last few days, for instance in the appointment of former Prime Minister Yegor T. Gaidar as a First Deputy Prime Minister."

Gaidar had overseen the imposition of "shock therapy" in the Yeltsin government throughout 1992 and was dismissed by Yeltsin as a concession to parliament in December of that year. Gaidar, a favorite and trusted ally of imperialist lenders, was brought back into the government on September 17, four days before Yeltsin dissolved parliament.

U.S. Undersecretary of the Treasury for International Affairs Lawrence Summers had been in Moscow on September 14 and 15 and was reportedly "encouraged" by the situation.

"The recent inflation rate has been too high, but I am encouraged by Russia's official plans to get the financial conditions back under control," he said. "It is crucial that these plans be implemented as a basis for economic growth in Russia and for the full effectiveness of Western support."

A senior IMF official, who insisted on anonymity, "hinted that Moscow might receive the loan by the end of the year if it displayed a strong and renewed commitment to reform."

Meanwhile, reports were appearing of Yeltsin visits to a number of military garrisons around Moscow.

In a demonstrative expression of the opposite interests of labor and capital, a senior U.S. Treasury Department official said of Russia: "The Russian economy looks good relative to what observers might have expected in September of 1990, 1991, or even 1992.... Output has stopped contracting. Coal prices have been increased. The exchange rate has stabilized. And dollar incomes are up substantially."

These are indicators of "success" for the capitalist financiers. There was no mention of the malnutrition, disease, or generalized want that has been the necessary by-product of these "successes." That is, of course, why the workers must take control.

### The Snake Strikes

"The sense among American officials," the September 20 *New York Times* concluded, "is that after weeks of dismay during the summer, when Russian reformers seemed to be losing ground, an important turn for the better was in the offing."

It was.

Two days later, Yeltsin announced his Presidential Decree No. 1400 dissolving parliament and imposing his own presidential rule.

On September 23 the *Financial Times* reported: "Senior officials of the G-7 industrialized countries have for some time considered the current parliament to be an important obstacle to economic reform which Mr. Yeltsin would have to remove."

The parliament has not been Yeltsin's only obstacle. Obstacles are everywhere around him. For example, *The New York Times* reported that Yeltsin, fifty-two decrees and four days later, in Presidential Decree No. 1453 of September 25, had dismissed the governor of Bryansk, who had been elected with 53 percent of the popular vote the previous April. This was but one of an evident flurry of decrees of Yeltsin's government, the full study of which would certainly help reveal the full scope of his problems.

Another, later decree of Yeltsin's on September 30, had much more universal significance: it announced that bread prices would be freed the next day. The *Financial Times* reported this as "one of several economic liberalization measures decreed by President Yeltsin, who is using his ban on parliament to push through changes which rebel deputies appear powerless to resist."

This statement is misleading on two counts. First, parliament has never resisted those kinds of reforms. Second, there is no indication that the "rebel" parliament, holed up at that time in the parliamentary building called the White House, made any move to resist this measure even then, although to have done so would



surely have won it some of the popular support it was so obviously lacking.

The decrees [also] cut grain subsidies, bring huge increases in rents and common domestic services, raise [prime interest] rates to 180 per cent a year, curb cheap credits to industry, [and] improve conditions for foreign investors.

These measures would obviously cause the price of bread to rise sharply, and rents were projected to increase tenfold!

The *Financial Times* went on: "The decisions reflect Mr. Yeltsin's confidence that he may impose harsh reforms while remaining secure in his position."

As a result of such decrees, Sergei Filatov, Yeltsin's chief of staff, predicted there would be a "difficult period, with many hardships, for the population." However, Yeltsin government officials reported that most opinion polls showed Yeltsin's popularity "had grown."

### Elections Without Democracy

Since he declared presidential rule and disbanded parliament on September 21, Yeltsin has promised December 12 elections to a new parliamentary body called a Duma, which is provided for in the constitution his hand-picked committee is drafting and which will also be put to a vote that same day.

Leaving aside the obvious fact that Yeltsin intends the masses of the working population to have no voice at all in determining the content of this new constitution and that nevertheless the population is expected to vote on the constitution and for the parliament provided for in it, December elections are far too early for any grouping but Yeltsin's own to prepare for. Initially Yeltsin had banned opposition parties and many opposition newspapers.

However, from Yeltsin's point of view — he will not have to face elections himself until sometime next year — early elections to parliament, in which he expects to guarantee that a majority of the new deputies are behind him, limit that uncomfortable campaigning period when unpopular reforms must be held in abatement and promises that will never be kept must be made to win votes.

The *Financial Times* reported that Yeltsin cabinet members "don't plan much until after the election" in terms of really harsh economic measures, an ominous claim considering the decree on bread and rent increases that was already announced.

### Which Side Are You On?

Neither Yeltsin nor the parliament, throughout the period of standoff — from September 21 until it ended in the military assaults of October 3 and 4 — were able to mobilize significant popular support on their side, although both sides tried to do so.

It is obvious that to most people, this was simply another instance of the party-state nomenklatura feuding over how to divide up power and property among themselves.

A poll conducted in St. Petersburg to learn who was the most favored candidate for presi-

dent among a list of possible contenders seems to reflect the mass disaffection with the prevailing political elite. Grigory Yavlinsky, a former economic adviser to Gorbachev ranked first with 21.7 percent of the vote, just beating Yeltsin, who received a meager 19.7 percent, followed by Alexander Rutskoi, Yeltsin's former vice president, who ranked last. Rutskoi, who headed up the parliamentary resistance and was arrested when Yeltsin's forces stormed the White House October 4, received a paltry 10.7 percent (*Financial Times*, September 17).

### But What Are the Workers Doing?

What has been the role of the trade unions in the current political crisis?

According to ITAR-TASS, in a vaguely formulated communique of September 23, the council of representatives of the Independent Miners Union in Vorkuta issued a statement supporting Yeltsin's decree for "constitutional reform and his appeal to the citizens of Russia."

The massive trade union federation, the Federation of Independent Trade Unions (FITU), with its 64 million members, took a neutral position in the conflict, expressing support for a call for new elections of both the parliament and the president and calling upon workers to "avoid provocation."

The Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Russia (which has ties with the American AFL-CIO) not only came out in support of Yeltsin's decree disbanding parliament. This Confederation also issued a reactionary call for Yeltsin to disband the FITU.

The FITU upper echelons, as well as the new independent or "free" trade unions, have proven incapable of offering any viable alternative to the bureaucrats' market reform program, instead having rather comfortably accepted privatization of the state-owned property as somehow inevitable, only trying to position themselves to settle in as a credible (and hopefully comfortable) "loyal opposition." Pursuant to this end, they have placed considerable emphasis on "demanding" that the government set up collective bargaining, "tripartite" negotiations where representatives of the government, the new capitalists/managers, and the trade unions could hammer out collective agreements which all parties would happily abide by.

Like the largest of the independent trade unions, the FITU leadership has welcomed the chance to practice the same bankrupt business unionism that the AFL-CIO bureaucracy does in the United States. Unfortunately for the FITU leadership, the material conditions for concessions to workers of the type which might nourish such business unionism simply do not exist in Russia. They are seeking to ride a dead horse.

Just as unfortunately, they have not shown that they are prepared to lead a fight against the drastic attacks on workers' lives even as the crisis has worsened.

However, the workers had, in the summer months, begun to move into action on their own, as was reported in an article by Renfrey Clarke from Moscow dated August 19:

Since the end of July, the Russian government has been challenged by the largest wave of strikes since the coal industry struggles of 1989-91. Even more impressive than the size of the actions has been the range of workers involved — the broadest since pre-revolutionary [pre-1917] times.

Once again, coal miners have been in the front ranks of the labor movement offensive. But the groups that have moved into struggle include timber workers, defence industry workers, television and radio employees, public transport workers, health workers — and even weather forecasters.

An important new feature has been the mounting of coordinated regional strike actions. In the Primorye [Maritime] Territory on the Pacific coast, a general stoppage on August 10 brought an estimated 600,000 workers out in protest against crippling increases in electricity charges.

Renfrey Clarke reported further that these worker actions had apparently forced the FITU leadership to adopt a more militant stance:

Probably the most crucial new development, however, has been the shift by the leadership of Russia's mass trade union federation to direct, active opposition to the government. After lengthy efforts at collaboration with the Yeltsin regime resulted only in broken promises, leaders of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia several months ago began developing a 'Plan of Collective Action.' This is intended as a coordinated strategy for the defence of workers' rights, aimed at maximizing the labor movement's political and legal strengths and culminating, if necessary, in massive strike action later this year.

The limitations of any strike actions or other measures that the FITU leadership could offer, however, are implicit in the full name of their Plan: it is the "Plan for Action During the Transition to a Market Economy." Acceptance of the need for "transition to a market economy" means acceptance of the measures by the government to impose this "transition."

Nevertheless, evidently realizing that even the conciliatory orientation of the FITU leadership might be changed under pressure from the ranks, the Yeltsin government set out to neutralize that union federation at the same time that it began its offensive against the parliament.

When the Yeltsin forces cut off electricity, telephones, and other services to the White House, where the parliamentary deputies were resisting Yeltsin's decree to disband, phone service to the FITU headquarters was also cut off.

On September 30, a presidential decree struck a crushing blow at the unions by depriving them of their main function, control over social welfare funds for the workers — sick pay, summer camp for the children, and a variety of benefits — that is, the main reason that workers retain their union affiliation.

These unions have never — either during the Stalin and post-Stalin period or during the reform era that was begun by Mikhail Gorbachev — functioned as fighting organizations for workers' rights. They have always functioned

*Continued on page 44*

# Latin American-Style Dictatorship in Moscow

by Misha Gutkin

*The following telephone interview was held on October 7, in Russian. The translation is by Misha Gutkin. Boris Kagarlitsky was an elected representative to the Moscow City Soviet before that body was dissolved by the Yeltsin government; he is a leading figure in the Russian Party of Labor, and serves on the staff of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia.*

**Q. Could you describe the situation in Moscow today and your reaction to the events?**

**A.** The situation is quite bleak, although yesterday and today it became a little bit easier. Generally speaking, this is a classic Latin American-style dictatorship now. The Moscow City Soviet has been disbanded, as have all the regional Soviets, and we no longer have a parliament; in other words, the legislative branch doesn't exist any more. And Yeltsin is talking about some new elections, but nobody knows how these should be held, on what basis, how many deputies are to be elected, or when. The December date is clearly impossible. So this is pure demagoguery. Even today some lists of candidates are supposed to appear, but we know that none of the opposition parties was able to register its candidates, and so on. So this is all very bleak.

Most of those detained were released, most of the deputies were released; yet at the same time they continue to detain people on the slightest suspicion or for violating the curfew. Up to now over 3,000 people have gone through this.

[According to the TASS news agency, 6–8,000 people were detained on each of the first few nights after October 3. As of October 12, Russian television news reported that 18,000 people had been detained for “curfew violations and administrative crimes” and 120 weapons confiscated. — M.G.]

**Q. So those are not the armed defenders of the White House or snipers?**

**A.** Well, even the official propaganda admits that very few armed men have been arrested so far. Very few weapons have been confiscated, less than twenty, I think, and that includes knives. No serious weapons have been confiscated. As for the arrest of snipers and commandos, the police aren't having much success. They are just grabbing people, and I suspect somebody is even making money on all this. I understand you can bribe your way out of an arrest, and some well-known suspects are out on the street, people who did take part in the rioting. So, spontaneously, a new kind of “tax” is born. This is good business for the police.

**Q. I heard you were also detained. Could you tell us about that?**

**A.** Together with another deputy of the Moscow City Soviet, Vladimir Kondratov, and the press secretary of the Russian trade unions, Aleksandr Segal, I was among the first dozens to be arrested. We were detained on Sunday night [October 3] about 11:30 p.m., while there was still something going on at the Ostankino television center. We were detained very far away from Ostankino and a few kilometers away from the White House.

We of course had no weapons—I've never held a weapon in my life—nor did we have any leaflets or any kind of literature; in other words, nothing at all “subversive.” We were smoking by the door of the October District Soviet next to a car in which, it must be said, we had been driven from the White House. But there was absolutely nothing going on. Suddenly some men wearing bulletproof vests appeared and grabbed us. They obviously knew where we had just come from. I smelled alcohol on their breath. They took us to a police station and began beating us there. When they found out we were deputies, they beat us some more. Then they said no charges would be filed and were going to let us go, but changed their minds. They claimed we had stolen a police car and proceeded to beat us again. This went on for about 25 hours—I didn't have a watch.

Finally they let us go. I think that was because people had started calling the police station; there were calls from abroad, as far away as Tokyo. So there was pressure from human rights groups and they let us go.

But this was a typical Stalinist operation: first, they charge you with some crime, then they beat a confession out of you, and later your confession becomes the only proof of your crime. As far as I know, my case is not unique; this is a widespread phenomenon now. We were lucky because we are fairly well known. But this is what's happening now.

We have been able to get all the Moscow Soviet deputies out, and the members of parliament are also being freed one by one. But the situation is quite different for scores of unknown people, those who have no friends in the West. We are unable to keep track of such a large number of cases. The human rights groups are not functioning now. They were not really needed during the last couple of years. So we don't have the infrastructure,

the activists who can keep track of all these cases, to defend all these people.

Besides that, the government is emphasizing the danger to the public, and there are armed men in the city. You can have different opinions about them, yet the government presumably does have a right to arrest for illegal weapons possession. On the other hand, there are scores of people being arrested without weapons. We just don't have the information about them.

**Q. You said you were in the White House. What do you think about the calls to arms that were made there?**

**A.** The actions of the leadership of the White House on Sunday night were, to say the least, totally incorrect. From the moral point of view, these actions were simply criminal. How could they direct unarmed people to storm Ostankino! They should have thought about what would happen if the troops guarding the TV center opened fire. In that sense I have very serious reservations about the actions of Ruskoi, Khasbulatov, Achalov [the parliament's defense minister], etc.

As for my reaction to the situation in general, it's quite clear who carried out a coup d'état, who violated the constitution, who provoked the violence, and the consequences of all these actions are quite clear as well. The coup was carried out by Yeltsin, and sooner or later he will have to pay for that. All the events that unfolded were simply the result of his coup.

**Q. You said the violence was provoked. How was that done?**

**A.** Everybody knows that the first shots were fired by the government forces guarding the mayor's office. This was even reported by Radio Liberty, which cannot be accused of pro-Communist leanings. If Radio Liberty is broadcasting pro-Communist propaganda, then I don't know what else to say. By the way, everybody is now listening to Radio Liberty and (sometimes) BBC again. This is a curious phenomenon.

People don't trust the TV and newspapers, where censorship has been introduced. The newspapers, in particular, are under punitive censorship, which means a whole run could

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# The Israeli-PLO Accords

by Michael Steven Smith

*Michael Steven Smith lived and worked in Israel in 1959 and represented the National Lawyers Guild investigating Israeli deportations of four Palestinian political leaders in 1986. He testified on this before the United Nations Special Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinians.*

Zionist settler colonialism has been peculiar in that, rather than exploiting a native population, it has sought to dispel and replace it. With the signing of the Israeli-PLO accords in Washington under American auspices, the Israeli colonial settler state has pretty much succeeded in its century-long goal. The Israelis, with Arafat's cooperation, have left the Palestinians with what amounts to an Indian reservation in the Gaza Strip and the small border town of Jericho on the West Bank. With the exception of the 325,000 Palestinians living as second-class citizens within Israel's 1948 borders, the Palestinian population has been driven out and abroad. At the time of its creation in 1948 the Zionist army seized 75 percent of what was Palestine and forced 750,000 Palestinians out of the country. There have been four wars and tens of thousands of refugees since then.

Whether the Palestinians will get their own state is left open. But even if a state is eventually constituted, it will be a Bantustan. By the accords Israel gave away nothing except its longstanding refusal to recognize the "terrorist" PLO. In the process it unloaded onto Arafat the job of policing the one million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. He has begun to import loyalist police.

The Israelis seem to be keeping the spoils of the 1967 war: the Old City of Jerusalem, over half of the West Bank (the settlements there and the military highways which link them), the richest parts of Gaza (including the coastline, minerals, and resorts), and the lion's share of the water supply in both areas. The Israeli Defense Force will continue its jurisdiction over Israeli settlers; the Palestinian police will police only Palestinians.

The Palestinians gave up their resistance, their 6½-year Intifada, with its children of the stones, some 400 of them dead, its 1,200 martyrs, its deportees, its 13,000 political prisoners, most routinely tortured, none yet set free. Left to memory are blown-up homes, the broken bones and beatings ordered by Rabin, the collective punishments, the uprooted olive trees, and massive cultural suppression. To the end Israel practiced wholesale terror — in August bombing villages in South Lebanon, killing over 100 civilians, driving 250,000 from their homes.

What did the Palestinians get? They got the Israeli boot off their necks. They got recognition as a people. And they got some badly needed aid, some \$2 billion pledged, which hardly makes up for what the Israelis stole and is but a fraction of what the U.S. gives Israel annually, but nonetheless is desperately needed. The people of the territories have been unable to work in Israel proper since March of 1993, when the Israelis sealed the border, not to mention the stagnation of the Palestinian economy, in which the Israelis made it so hard a person literally had to get permission from the Israeli army to plant a tomato. The final blow was the cutting off of aid by the Saudi regime after the Gulf war.

Indeed the Palestinians got a raw deal. There is nothing helpful in prettifying it. Those who criticize Arafat and the accord, however, are obliged to state their alternative. It is not clear that the Palestinians could have gotten more, given the relationship of forces between their progressive nationalist movement and the now unfettered might of the oil-minded United States backing up Israel, which itself is a formidable military power. Moreover, the unfortunate leadership of the PLO, historically and recently, with its foolish support for Saddam Hussein during the Gulf war, ill served the Palestinian aspirations. As Noam Chomsky recently wrote of the Palestinians, "The agreement entails abandonment of most of their hopes, at least for the foreseeable future. Nonetheless, realistic alternatives may be much worse."

The head of the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks, the respected Gaza physician Dr. Haider Abdul Shafi, who resigned his position when he evidently learned of Arafat's secret talks in Norway, and who refused to attend the Washington, D.C., signing ceremony, spoke in Bethlehem last July. "The critical issue," he said,

is transforming our society. All else is inconsequential.... We must decide amongst ourselves to use all our strength and resources to develop our collective leadership and the democratic institutions which will achieve our goals and guide us in the future.... The important thing is for us to take care of our internal situation and to organize our society and correct those negative aspects from which it has been suffering for

generations and which is the main reason for our losses against our foes.<sup>1</sup>

To this we can add that the new institutions will hopefully function to facilitate the reaching out by Palestinians to like-minded Israelis and other allies in the region. As for the Israelis, they can now legally talk to the PLO, whereas in the past they were imprisoned for doing so.

How will Arafat and his police force react to the Palestinians' "strengthening their democratic institutions?" Will Israel, which will seek to control the Palestinian police, allow this? Will Arafat allow oppositional newspapers, meetings, demonstrations, political parties? The strength of the Palestinian people is bolstered by the democracy that exists in their society. Arafat's negotiations in Norway, behind the back of his own organization and his own people, portends badly.

Writing prophetically in *The Iron Wall*, the rightist ideological forebear of Zionism, Vladimir Jabotinsky, coldly assessed the psychology of the native Palestinians:

They look upon Palestine with the same instinctive love and true fervor that any Aztec looked upon his Mexico or any Sioux upon his prairie. Each people will struggle against colonizers until the last spark of hope that they can avoid the dangers of conquest and colonization is extinguished. The Palestinians will struggle in this way until there is hardly a spark of hope.<sup>2</sup>

When I was in Palestine with a delegation of attorneys just before the Intifada in 1986 we met with Israeli lawyer Felicia Langer, who was representing the four Arab deportees whose case we came to investigate. We asked her how the Israelis, given their own history, could be brutalizing the Palestinians. She replied that "suffering is not ennobling."

So it remains an irony of history that the Palestinians were caused to suffer a diaspora, like the Jews, because of the Zionists and their utopian notion, supported by the U.S. for its own reasons, that they could build an exclusively Jewish haven.

For the foreseeable future it seems that the accords will allow the Palestinians to be marginally better off...and still be "sparked with hope." It was hope, too, that the eminent socialist scholar of Jewish background Isaac Deutscher wrote about at the end of the 1967 war.

I hope that together with other nations, the Jews will ultimately become aware — or regain awareness — of the inadequacy of the nation-state, and that they will find their way back to the moral and political heritage that the genius of the Jews who have gone beyond Jewry (Spinoza, Marx, Luxemburg, Heine, Freud, Einstein, Trotsky) has left us — the message of universal human emancipation.<sup>3</sup> □

October 18, 1993

1. As quoted by Noam Chomsky in *Z* magazine, October 1993.

2. Vladimir Jabotinsky, "The Iron Wall," *Rassvet*, Nov. 4, 1923, as quoted in *The Hidden History of Zionism* by Ralph Schoenman, Socialist Action, 1988

3. Isaac Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 41.

# U.S. Out of Somalia — No Intervention in Haiti or Cuba!

by George Saunders

**W**idespread calls for withdrawal from Somalia have come in the wake of the October 3–4 fighting in Mogadishu in which many US soldiers were killed and wounded. This shows that despite the wishes of America's rulers, the "Vietnam syndrome" has not been overcome. There is the potential for resurgence of the kind of antiwar movement that arose during the Gulf War. (That movement died down mainly because the Gulf War ended so quickly; unlike in Vietnam, there was no substantial U.S. occupation and no mass popular movement in Iraq resisting U.S. intervention.)

Clinton tried to defuse the pressure for immediate withdrawal by promising to get out by March 31, 1994, but at the same time he escalated the U.S. troop presence in Somalia.

The deep dissatisfaction this is causing was illustrated by an article in the *Los Angeles Times* October 17 entitled "Deaths in Somalia Spark Flood of Opposition in U.S." It told about Dorothy Morris, a 45-year-old nurse's aide in Lowell, Massachusetts, who has collected thousands of signatures on a petition calling for Clinton to withdraw from Somalia immediately.

Morris still remembers how she sometimes wept at the loss of American lives in the Vietnam War and how guilty she felt that she was too busy raising young children to join the anti-war protests of that era.

Now that Morris' 21-year-old son, Steven, has been sent by the Army to serve in Somalia, she says she has decided to make amends.

She began collecting signatures on her petition after seeing television pictures of a dead U.S. soldier being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu. "People are really angry about this," she said. "Many of them ask if they can sign the petition twice."

The *LA Times* reported that "from Maine to California" American citizens

have been horrified by the TV pictures of U.S. soldiers dying in Mogadishu, and many think the troops ought to come home sooner than the six-month deadline set by Clinton.

The newspaper added that, according to the latest Gallup Poll, 51 percent of Americans do not understand why U.S. troops are in Somalia and 37 percent want them home immediately, while only 21 percent support Clinton's plan of staying in Somalia six more months.

The polling data, combined with a deluge of calls, letters, petitions, and other hometown protests, have fueled the firestorm of criti-

cism the President has heard from members of Congress.

Many who now oppose the U.S. presence in Somalia say they originally favored it "because of the pictures they saw on television last year of the starving Somali children" — referring to the media campaign that was used to prepare the American population for this intervention. Today what they see on television is different.

"As a people, we cannot watch the lifeless body of one more of our nation's most valuable resources — our youth — dragged through the streets of someone else's country," Donna Langlois of Coral Springs, Florida, wrote to Clinton. Her oldest son, Marc, served in the Gulf War.

The *LA Times* indicated that many of those opposing the Somalia intervention are Vietnam veterans. Clinton's act of escalating-while-talking-about-withdrawal is an eerie reminder of the Vietnam policies of Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon. Ron Miller, head of a veterans program in Marietta, Georgia, was quoted as saying: "A lot of people refer to it as the gradual response or creeping response, but what it really boils down to is, basically, that is what happened in Vietnam."

The newspaper added that "the reaction to the killings in Somalia has made it more difficult for Clinton if he wants to intervene in Bosnia or Haiti."

Derinda Pedigo, a Miami veteran, wrote a letter to a local paper denouncing Clinton as a "draft-dodging, baby boomer President," but Pedigo approved the decision not to land troops in Haiti. His brother was on the U.S. ship that turned back from landing in Port-au-Prince when Haiti's death squad military government staged a protest.

Why are U.S. and UN troops being killed and maimed, and many more Somalis suffering the same fate in their own country? The U.S. government and big business media want people to believe that "anarchy" in Mogadishu and rivalry among trigger-happy Somali "warlords" is the cause. But why is the U.S. government — the biggest "warlord" of them all — siding with one Somali faction against another? After all, there has been civil war and famine in many countries. Why, then, was Somalia singled out for U.S. intervention?

A review of the events may help explain. The present crisis is largely a legacy from the former dictator of Somalia, Siad Barre, who ruled with barbaric cruelty and massive U.S. aid and support for ten years before he was

overthrown by a coalition of Somali opposition movements in 1991.

Conflict among those who overthrew the dictator ensued, with some remaining elements of the dictatorial regime — in particular, Siad Barre's relative and former defense minister General Herse ("Morgan") — participating in the bloodshed and contributing to the turmoil. The drastic disruptions of civil war resulted in famine.

But again, that kind of situation is not unique to Somalia.

What was special about Somalia was its strategic position on the Horn of Africa, near the shipping routes to the Suez Canal, and the fact that while in power, as the *LA Times* reported last January, Siad Barre granted exploration and drilling rights in nearly two-thirds of his country to three U.S. oil companies. One of those companies discovered major oil reserves beneath Somali soil. That company's offices were used as headquarters in preparing the landing of U.S. troops last year.

Besides that, according to one report, UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (from a wealthy old Egyptian family) has ties with the Ali Mahdi faction in northern Mogadishu — and the U.S./UN operation has clearly favored that faction over the other main one. The faction "out of favor" is of course that of Gen. Mohammed Farah Aidid, a former Somali ambassador, whose political organization, the Somali National Alliance (SNA), played a major role in ousting dictator Siad Barre.

It is likely that the Ali Mahdi faction is viewed as more amenable to confirming the oil rights that Siad Barre granted, while the Aidid faction is viewed as "unreliable," capable of canceling or rewriting the Siad Barre concessions to the oil companies or asking the U.S. government to get out of its naval base on the Red Sea in northern Somalia.

This probably explains as well the "lack of clarity" of the U.S. operation in Somalia. The "humanitarian" goal was a good excuse for the initial intervention, but once the process of trying to destroy the unreliable Aidid group began (around June of this year), a new justification had to be invented — to "stabilize the country," to "prevent the return of anarchy and famine in the future."

The real reason for the U.S. presence, protecting the oil rights of U.S. corporations and the geopolitical interests of the U.S. government and corporate America, is not officially stated because it could not win the necessary popular support. What American family would want their sons' lives lost or even risked to safeguard potential oil earnings for Conoco?!

Meanwhile, according to the October 6 *Christian Science Monitor*, the fact that for four months Gen. Aidid "evaded capture by highly trained antiterrorist US Delta Force commandos" resulted in growing support for him among Somalis, "who view him as a national hero fighting imperialism." (It is pos-

*Continued on page 49*



# Why We Oppose U.S./UN Intervention in Haiti

The following are excerpts from a statement written by the Shut Down Guantanamo Coalition (SDGC). For the full text, write the SDGC at PO Box 334 Cathedral Station, NYC 10025, or call (212) 592-3612. We have made some editorial changes to facilitate excerpting and for reasons of style.

U.S.-Haiti relations began in 1804 [with] the punishing [of] Haiti's first government, born of a slave rebellion, [by] a U.S. embargo lasting decades. In July 1915, the U.S. dispatched thousands of Marines to Haiti, beginning a 19-year period of military occupation under the pretext that U.S. and European interests were threatened. The military force [treated] the Haitian population... with utmost brutality and racism. The patriotic resistance was crushed. Then-Major Smedley Butler prided himself in having "hunted the Cacos [Haitian resistance fighters] like pigs." Thousands of peasants were tortured and maimed. Between 1915 and 1920, some 50,000 were killed.

The U.S. occupation force laid the foundation for a century of political and economic domination of Haiti, seizing control of Haiti's banks, writing and imposing a new constitution, reinstating the corvée (the system of forced labor for agricultural workers), censoring the press, arresting political dissidents and trying them in military courts, and above all establishing a new army, trained by the United States. The American government, in collusion with the Haitian bourgeoisie and big landowners kept [most of the people of] Haiti in poverty and illiteracy and under a reign of terror in order to extract millions of dollars in profits and maintain economic and political control.

## One in the Hand Is Worth Two in the Putsch

The U.S. propped up the brutal Duvalier family dictatorship from 1957 to 1986. A Marine Corps detachment was stationed in Haiti from 1958 through 1963, ostensibly to "reorganize the army and police force" — the same argument we are hearing for U.S. intervention today. After "Baby Doc" Duvalier was forced to flee in 1986, the U.S. supported a series of repressive military regimes with arms, military training, and financial assistance. Today's coup leaders are in large part of product of the U.S. government's earlier programs.

But in December 1990, a tidal wave — a "lavalas" — of popular [indignation] elected Fr. Jean-Bertrand Aristide to the office of president. Supported, by workers, peasants, the unemployed, and a large sector of the petty bourgeoisie, Aristide began to bring about changes in Haiti, including popular participation in government, a literacy program, [moves toward] political and economic self-determination, and an attempt to dismantle some of the brutal machinery of repression — the corrupt army and the Tonton Macoutes death squads. The U.S. government sub-

verted the power of Haiti's first democratically elected president by, among other means, spending at least \$100 million to bolster the tiny Haitian elite's opposition to Aristide. The coup d'état of September 30, 1991, forced Aristide into exile and the progressive trend [underground]. Since the coup the putschists have killed as many as 5,000 Aristide supporters and civilian participants in the popular movement.

Following the coup, the Organization of American States (OAS) initiated an embargo of all goods to or from Haiti, which its member states violated at will. U.S. companies went to then-President Bush and asked him to lift the embargo. U.S. companies which assemble clothing, apparel, sporting goods, and electronics were given licenses to go right back to Haiti. The first thing the companies did upon return was fire all the trade unionists in the factories, lengthen work hours, speed up the pace of work, and slash wages.

[One measure taken by Aristide that had particularly provoked the ire of the U.S. corporate establishment and probably swung tacit U.S. government support behind the coup makers was his raising of the minimum wage for Haitian workers.]

Over the last 10 years, Central America and the Caribbean have been developed specifically as low-waged labor-intensive assembly zones — mini-Taiwans. Today, more than half of all exports from this region to the U.S. are apparel, footwear, and leather goods, not bananas or sugar. Haiti is the lowest-waged sector in the Caribbean and Central America. Any increase in wages there would have a "demonstration effect" throughout the region, as well as cut into manufacturers' profits.

[Wages were so low in Haiti that workers were constantly leaving the country, willing to accept low-paying jobs elsewhere. Employers had no objection to this, neither in the Dominican Republic and Jamaica, nor ultimately in the U.S. If Aristide's raising of the minimum wage had been allowed to stand,] the wage-driven migration of Haitian workers throughout the region would have come to an end. To drive down wages in the U.S., and to keep them low in the Dominican Republic and Jamaica, the ruling classes had to maintain an even lower-waged workforce in textiles in Haiti.

The U.S. government immediately attacked President Aristide, demanding that he cut the wage increase, and sent a team from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to find ways to maintain Haiti as a low-wage haven for U.S. companies. In its internal report, USAID acknowledged that

the U.S. could not get away with doing this openly and needed to hide behind a front group to carry out U.S. policy. For that purpose, USAID suggested using Prominex (the Center for Promotion of Investment and Exports), an investment promotion group in Haiti, which is almost completely funded by USAID.

Next the U.S. sent a research team from the Stanford Research Institute to canvass the business community in Haiti as to what they thought of the Aristide administration. Not surprisingly, their study concluded that businesses were opposed to the minimum wage increases, which had raised wages from 27 cents an hour on the average to 50 cents an hour, with benefits.

Instead of recognizing the rights of workers to unionize, USAID allocated \$26.7 million to oppose the Aristide government's labor reforms while permitting corrupt businessmen to do whatever they pleased. Over the last few years, the U.S. government has spent at least \$100 million to bolster the Haitian elite, which pays no taxes on income. [The *Christian Science Monitor* of October 15, 1993, estimated there are 2,000 wealthy Haitian families, an army of 7,000, and a police force of 1,500. No estimate was given on informers, death squad members, and other covert operatives.]

A few weeks after the coup there was not a single union contract in any of Haiti's textile assembly plants.

Thus, Clinton continued Bush's policies of low-wage labor-intensive assembly zones in the Caribbean basin, allowing oil companies, assembly firms, manufacturers, banks, and other U.S.-based corporations to defy the embargo on trade with Haiti and profit from the exploitation and misery of the Haitian people. Despite the embargo, \$67 million in apparel came out of Haiti into the U.S. in 1992.

## The July 3 Accord — Dante Caputo's Inferno

The September 1991 coup allowed the U.S. government to regain political power and reassert its economic domination over Haiti. Similarly the July 3, 1993, "Governor's Island Accord" is designed to further those goals. The Accord promised to return Aristide to Haiti's presidency by October 30, 1993, but allowed for the bloody military junta led by General Raoul Cedras to go unpunished and retain its positions.

The accord also calls for U.S. military forces to be sent to Haiti, under the auspices

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# A Report Back from Cuba

by Diane Wang

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*Diane Wang is financial secretary of Local 1-326 Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union in Rodeo, California, and a longtime Cuba solidarity activist. This article first appeared in the Summer 1993 issue of *Independent Politics* and is reprinted by permission.*

*¡Resisteremos, venceremos!* “We will resist, we will win!”

I returned from a recent trip to Cuba in May convinced that this is not only a slogan but a reality. The Cuban revolution can survive the dangerous situation it faces today. Those of us who have watched with dismay the defeat of the Sandinistas, the racist riots in Germany, and the collapse of the Soviet Union too easily brace ourselves for another disaster. That is not the attitude in Cuba.

The Peace for Cuba delegation I traveled with was headed by former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, distinguished author Alice Walker, and American Indian leader Dennis Banks. We took \$75,000 worth of medicine and two ophthalmological neurologists to help confront the crisis. We were shown the Cuban medical system and good causes for optimism.

Cuba does face the most serious challenge since its Revolution in 1959. The United States tightened the economic blockade with passage of the Torricelli Bill last year, periodically threatens Cuba with military war games, and bombards the island with propaganda broadcasts daily. The collapse of the Soviet Union means that Cuba can no longer obtain fair prices for its goods. The island is living on about 22 percent of its former income, with its international purchasing power falling dramatically. The recent “storm of the century” did some \$1 billion worth of damage and destroyed vital crops.

The same leadership that led a handful of fighters in the Sierra Maestra to take power from the dictator Batista 34 years ago does not find these odds against Cuba overwhelming. They have charted a careful course to develop Cuba’s economy despite the intensified U.S. blockade and are deepening the revolutionary commitment of the Cuban people.

## Medical Research and Exports

While the United States and Soviet Union devoted billions of dollars to weapons and space exploration, Cuba has spent the bulk of its research money on the development of medicine. As a result, Cuba has developed a highly sophisticated biotechnology and pharmaceutical industry.

The Finlay Research Institute, which we visited, demonstrates the tremendous economic potential. Concepción Campa Huerdo, the Institute’s director and a member of the

Council of State, is the discoverer of the only vaccine effective against meningitis B. Finlay heads a national program of research, development, and production of vaccines at 20 centers. They produce vaccines against meningitis, rabies, measles, rubella, hepatitis B, diphtheria, polio, and tetanus.

The center is now developing vaccines against hepatitis A and C, as well as an effective vaccine against cholera and even against parasitic infections. Other Cuban centers have developed a remarkable epidermal growth factor that dramatically speeds the recovery of burn victims and PPG-40, a byproduct of sugar cane that effectively lowers cholesterol.

This work is a tremendous potential for export and income. UNICEF and most developing countries cannot afford the exploitative prices charged by U.S. pharmaceutical firms. At a recent international gathering in Bogotá, Colombia, for example, Cuba offered 50 million vaccines necessary for a massive neonatal tetanus program at a reasonable price.

Even in the Special Period, as the current course of rationing and tight budgeting is called, medical research is given a priority. “We are not simply dealing with a business,” the Finlay directors explained, “but with life and death.”

## Selling Sun, Rum, and Cigars

Cuba is also expanding its tourist trades from Canada, Europe, and Latin America to attract foreign currency. The elegant Comodoro Hotel, where we stayed, for example, earns \$20 million each year for Cuba.

Many progressives in the United States shudder at the tourist trade, pointing to the evidence of prostitution that has reappeared, the tensions and corruption that seem like an inevitable consequence. But an interview with the director of the Hotel Comodoro, as well as discussions with our tour guides, bus boys, and waitresses convinced me that again we underestimated the Cubans.

Rogelio Rodríguez, the Comodoro’s director, responded firmly when I asked whether Cubans tried to get jobs in the tourist industry so that they would have access to foreigners and their money. He admitted that there might be some who are so self-centered, “but that is not the human quality of our youth,” he insisted. “They are the creators and bearers of our revolution.”

As evidence, he pointed out that the hotel personnel pool their tips, sharing it among all

the workers and donating a portion for public health. After the storm, the hotel’s workers showed such all-out dedication to repair the damage that the hotel was ready for business one week later, earning an award from the Confederation of Cuban Trade Unions and a visit from Cuban president Fidel Castro. The workers also donated \$6,000 to help in Cuba’s reconstruction. The hotel has active branches of the trade union and the Union of Communist Youth. In the last year, nearly one-third of the 650 workers have participated in the volunteer farm production plans. “Others would like to go to the countryside and help,” Rodríguez said, “but we cannot spare them from their job right now.”

## Food Production Plan

Cuba’s main priority is feeding all its people. Despite the crisis, Cuba has been able to guarantee a diet of 2,100 calories a day to everyone by rationing rice, beans, bread, and other essentials. But the lack of concentrated feed has drastically cut the milk and meat production. While Cuba used to provide milk for all children, now it can only assure milk to children under seven years old and those on special diets.

In response, Cuba has mobilized its citizens. The Committees to Defend the Revolution organized in all Cuba’s communities maintain small garden plots to help supplement people’s supply. But most importantly, people are volunteering to go to the countryside for periods ranging from two weeks to two years to increase farm production.

We visited a state farm outside Havana, one of eight that provides most of the food for both the city and province of Havana. Along with the 1,400 regular workers, the farm now has ten contingents of volunteers. Three contingents are made up of those who come to work for two weeks. The other seven contingents at this one farm are made up of 2,400 volunteers who are devoting two years to food production. These people work eleven days and then go home to the city for three days. The results have been dramatic: food production at this one farm has increased from 24,000 to 55,000 tons a year.

The farms have responded to the Special Period with other innovations. While two years ago this farm relied entirely on oil-fueled machinery, they now have 268 oxen to help instead.

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# Historic Cuba Solidarity Conference

by Barry Weisleder

Over 280 labor activists from across Canada and the United States gathered for a historic conference with union leaders from Cuba, in Toronto, October 1-3.

Nearly half the participants came from the U.S., where there is no opportunity to meet with Cuban unionists because of travel restrictions imposed by Washington.

The International Trade Union Conference in Solidarity with Cuba was sponsored by Worker to Worker Canada-Cuba Labour Solidarity Committee, and U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange.

The impressive list of conference labor endorsements included: Canadian Auto Workers, Ontario Public Service Employees Union, Canadian Union of Postal Workers, United Food and Commercial Workers, Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (District 15 — city of Toronto), the Ontario Federation of Labour, United Electrical Workers, and Hospital and Health Care Workers Local 1199 (New York City), along with labor councils in metropolitan Toronto, Ottawa, and Hamilton, Ontario.

Many of the participants were also active socialists, including supporters of the Fourth International, the Communist parties of Canada and the U.S., and Canada's labor party, the New Democratic Party (NDP).

The Cuban representatives were: Albis Nubia Favier Ramirez, secretary general of the union of public health workers in Santiago de Cuba; Manuel Montero Bistilleiro, a staff member of the foreign relations division of the Cuban Trade Union Federation; and Angel Luis Mena Kindelan, secretary general of the light industry workers union.

Through workshops and plenary sessions they spoke to the conference, and answered questions concerning the structure of working class organizations and workers' rights in Cuba, and the effect of the U.S. blockade and the "special period" of austerity on Cuban workers.

Although Cuba is undergoing an economic crisis a hundred times worse than those in Canada or the U.S. — a crisis imposed by imperialist Cold War policies — the conference participants were inspired by testimony

that the Cuban government has not closed schools, hospitals, or child care centers.

General elections held in Cuba last February enjoyed remarkable participation and demonstrated ample support for the government. Less than half of one percent of the electorate failed to vote, and less than 7 percent cast blank or spoiled ballots in protest.

In the final plenary session on Sunday, participants voted unanimously to demand that Washington lift its inhuman blockade and remove any and all bans against trade and commerce with Cuba or travel to that beleaguered island.

The meeting also called upon the Canadian Labour Congress to establish formal bilateral relations with the Cuban Trade Union Federation. It also endorsed ongoing projects of material aid to Cuba, like the Pastors for Peace Friendship Caravan, which has successfully challenged restrictive government border-crossing policies and filled scores and scores of trucks in both Canada and the U.S. with aid destined for revolutionary Cuba. □

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# “Japanese-Style” Labor Relations a Success? Zenroren Says “Not!”

by Fred Gustafson

*A somewhat different version of this article was recently published in In These Times. We are pleased that the author also chose to submit it to our publication.*

Since about the mid-1980s, everyone from the *Wall Street Journal* to current Labor Secretary Robert Reich has been trumpeting “Japanese-style labor-management relations” as the cure for everything from U.S. employee absenteeism to America’s general economic malaise. But representatives from Japan’s independent labor federation, Zenroren, who visited Pittsburgh recently, warn that the world has been sold a bill of goods regarding the supposedly idyllic condition of Japanese worklife.

Norihisa Motono, secretary of Zenroren, argues that the conditions of Japanese workers cannot be understood apart from the impact of the pervasive corruption which recently led to the historic first defeat of Japan’s long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

Motono said the current crisis of Japanese politics has been misrepresented, in both Japan and the United States. He said that this skewed reportage stems from the desire of business interests in both countries to maintain the “global partnership” between the world’s two most powerful capitalist classes.

Despite the attempt of Japan’s rulers to portray an image of social “harmony” to the world, Nobuhiro Hujiyoshi of the Japanese Labor Research Institute says that opposition to the current system is organized and growing. “There is a united front of various strata, including honest factions of the opposition parties (especially the Communists and Socialists), Zenroren, women’s organizations, farmers, and merchants. Together they have created the Progressive Forum, which has 4.5 million members and is utterly opposed to the government’s economic and political policies.”

Hujiyoshi says the movement is influential, and the pressure it brought to bear in the case of the Konomoru bribery scandal was partly responsible for the dissolution of the Diet, which forced new elections. Demonstrations of over 100,000 Japanese each day outside the Diet building went routinely unreported in the Japanese media, but were a significant factor in swaying LDP’s parliamentary fence-sitters to vote against the government.

Motono cites the ruling LDP’s insistence on supporting the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty as one example of its servility to business interests. The desire of these interests to “project power” abroad has led many of them to call for remilitarization, such as dispatching Japanese Defense Forces to Cambodia, even

though this violates the Japanese Constitution.

Motono also charges most major opposition parties with collaboration with the LDP on an electoral “reform” proposal which would virtually guarantee the LDP permanent domination of Japanese politics. He says that this is “typical of a major trend” in Japanese politics, in which some trade unions and political parties would like to see two parties with one conservative ideology, such as that shared by the Democrats and Republicans in the U.S.

Motono says that Zenroren is one of Japan’s two “trade union centers,” both of which were founded in 1989. One “center,” Rengo, which represents eight million workers, Motono described as “collaborationist” and “militarist.” He charges Rengo with acquiescing in the LDP cutbacks in social welfare and education during the 1980s, policies he derides as “Japanese Reaganomics.”

The two-million-member Zenroren, by contrast, is independent of capital, the political parties, and the government. “Zenroren was founded to defend peace, democracy, and workers’ rights,” says Motono. “Trade unions should unite workers of all beliefs and put forward programs on which all workers agree.”

Motono, Hujiyoshi, and their translator, Ms. Mitsue Sakamoto, were in Pittsburgh on the third leg of a tri-city tour, which had already taken them to San Francisco and New York. The three Japanese labor representatives were guests of the Pittsburgh-based United Electrical Workers (UE). They were honored at a buffet-style dinner held in the UE’s main Conference Room.

Representatives from Pittsburgh-area union locals and internationals, including the United Steelworkers of America, Service Employees International Union, the United Mineworkers, and the United Food and Commercial Workers, were on hand to greet the Japanese. In an informal discussion following dinner, Zenroren and the American unionists took turns asking each other questions.

Responding to a question about Japanese living standards, Motono surprised some in the crowd when he stated that during the 1980s the living standards of most Japanese workers fell. He attributed much of the current rise in dissatisfaction in Japan to the fact that “restructuring” of industrial monopolies has led to the dismissal of many white-collar

workers and managers who had previously considered their jobs secure for life.

Hujiyoshi said that he had come here in part to study the conditions of Japanese workers in the U.S., and also to compare the buying power of workers’ wages in the two countries. He said that prices for basic consumer goods, such as food, are as much as one-third higher in Japan. But he also emphasized that many services which Americans must buy on the private market are part of the public sector in Japan. He cited health care, which the Japanese offer through a single-payer system similar to Canada’s, as a service which is much less costly in Japan.

He warned against the hegemony of U.S. and Japanese multinational corporations and cautioned that President Clinton was promoting that hegemony through his trade policies. On the North American Free Trade Agreement he warned, “If the U.S. labor movement goes along with NAFTA, it will wither.” He argued, “It is important to develop the international labor movement to control the arbitrary practices of multinational corporations in the global workplace.”

This was underlined earlier in the day at a visit by Zenroren to the offices of UE District 6 and Local 610.

Bob Kingsley, UE’s current director of organizing, told the assembled trade unionists of trying to organize a California plant run by the American subsidiary of Kyowa, a Japanese multinational, where workers were being paid \$5.00 hourly to assemble television cabinets.

Kingsley said he had difficulty finding information about the company. When he eventually contacted Zenroren, the Japanese labor federation reported that workers similarly employed at the main Kyowa plant outside Tokyo were receiving the equivalent of \$15.00 hourly.

Motono noted the lack of contact between U.S. and Japanese labor, then confessed to having been a prisoner of a provincial and limited viewpoint. “Frankly, I was not interested in the U.S. trade union movement, but I was very interested in U.S.-Japanese relations.” He said his attitude changed after he listened to Ed Bruno, who was then UE’s director of organizing and who went to Japan in 1991 to participate in a conference on Japanese-style industrial relations. Motono said, “I realized that workers in Japan and the United States have similar problems.” □

# Minnesota Rallies for Mineworkers and Staley Workers

by Melanie Benson

The author is a member of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005 in Minneapolis—St. Paul.

More than two hundred unionists and supporters rallied in Minneapolis October 9 and contributed over \$3,000 in a show of solidarity with striking mineworkers and with workers locked out of the A.E. Staley corn-processing plant in Decatur, Illinois. Labor history professor Peter Rachleff called the gathering "the most significant rally in a long time" as he recognized the presence of former P-9 strikers from Austin, Minnesota, who had helped galvanize the labor movement in their strike against Hormel in 1986. He noted that the packed room reflected the appeal of the imagination, commitment, and solidarity shown in the way the Staley workers are fighting back against greedy employers, and observed that the entire labor movement grows stronger as we organize to help our brothers and sisters.

Tom Morrin from Grainmillers Local 1, which is on strike against the corporate agricultural giant Cargill, read a disgusting management-rights clause that the employer is trying to impose on the workers in Savage, Minnesota. Jim Sarf, a ninth-generation farmer and member of the National Farmers' Organization, spoke of the economic exploitation of the family farmer by these corporate giants and of the need for collective action by farmers and workers.

Bill Urman, Teamsters international vice-president, urged concrete support by reminding those present, "When you fight a battle, if you're not supporting the troops on the front line, you're going to lose the battle." Bernie Brommer, president of the Minnesota AFL-CIO, pledged to contact all 740 affiliated organizations to ask for their help, and lauded the Staley workers and the mineworkers for their energy, courage, conviction, and hope.

Dave Watts, president of Local 837 of the Allied Industrial Workers (AIW) representing the 800 workers locked out of the A.E. Staley plant, outlined the key issues in their struggle. When Local 837's 116-page contract with Staley expired at the end of September 1992, management tried to impose a "17-page disaster...one big management-rights clause...that destroys integrity and mocks justice." The contract would have undermined seniority, established a two-tier wage, and mandated 12-hour rotating shifts

in a "volatile chemical plant" where the injury rate is already high. Referring to the poster proclaiming "Illinois Is a War Zone," Watts said Local 837 trained itself as an army to fight back "smart and hard," simultaneously using work-to-rule strategies inside the plant, educating the public, doing mass mailings, and organizing rallies, support groups, and Road Warriors to take their message across the country. After a highly successful rally of 5,000 on June 26 that included a human billboard, Staley locked the workers out and is now trying to run the plant with nonunion Staley employees and scabs.

Watts urged rally participants to boycott Domino sugar and GW sugar, both owned by Staley's parent company, the \$6 billion British corporation Tate and Lyle, as well as State Farm Insurance, which has a financial interest in Staley. He also invited everyone to attend another solidarity rally in Decatur on November 6, two days after the local's 50th anniversary.

United Mineworkers of America's Cecil Roberts electrified the crowd with his analysis of what's happening to workers in America today. After thanking all the contributing unions for their support, he suggested that we "throw away our [separate union] tags — we're just one big union the whole world over." He reported that 17,000 coal miners are currently on strike, struggling for a fair contract with mine owners of six companies in seven states. Despite the fact that coal miners have doubled their productivity and cut labor costs in half during the past ten years, mine operators have laid off 100,000 miners and are trying to open and operate new mines with nonunion workers.

Roberts dated today's difficulties back to 1980, when then-President Ronald Reagan initiated a conflict with the unions by firing the PATCO (air traffic controller) strikers and breaking their union. "But it's our fault for not shutting the country down," he added. "Any time you stand idly by and let an entire union be wiped out and wring your hands, it's going to be you next, my friend." He described the current situation: "Don't get scared — it's like economic class warfare here — and if you're confused about what side of the issue you're on, remember: *you* work, and *they* don't."



Roberts spoke of the need for a labor agenda, and the need to be "a tad more militant as to how we go about that agenda," including national health care, equal rights, an elimination of scabbing, opposition to NAFTA, and solidarity. He commented that national health care is now being widely discussed, although at one time it would have been denounced as socialism. "I'm from Cabin Creek," he joked, "and I don't know socialism from rheumatism." (The mining industry is notorious for deaths, accidents, and illness — 200,000 U.S. miners have died from black lung disease in this century and 100,000 have been killed in mine accidents.)

On the subject of worker-to-worker solidarity, Roberts concluded: "This is about all of us. They're getting us one at a time. We don't need a strike here and a strike there. If the legislators won't move, maybe we need just one *big ol' strike*." □

For more information about the Staley workers' struggle, contact the Amalgamated Industrial Workers (AIW) Local 837 at (217)876-7006. Send your checks to the AIW Local 837 Lock-out Fund, 2882 North Dineen, Decatur IL 62526.

For more information about the mineworkers' strike, there is an information hot line: 1-800-334-UMWA. Also see the appeal for support to UMWA in the letters section of this issue of *BIDOM*.

# Consider Call for Convention of a U.S. Labor Party

by David Riehle

About 80 unionists from some 23 states met in Chicago October 9 in response to an invitation from Tony Mazzocchi, founder of Labor Party Advocates (LPA), to convene as an "interim steering committee" to discuss future action by LPA.

This was the first formal meeting called by Mazzocchi since the formation of LPA about 3 years ago. Since that time LPA has sought to enroll new members and issued periodic newsletters. Mazzocchi has spoken often on the need for a labor party, to meetings organized by LPA supporters, at official union functions, and in the news media. In some cities LPA supporters have established membership chapters.

In a letter to those invited to the Chicago meeting Mazzocchi explained that the proposed focus of the meeting would include:

1. A review of LPA progress since its inception and the decision to convene this interim steering committee.
2. The calling of a convention for the formation of a Labor Party in early 1995.
3. Establishment of committees to prepare the issues that will be debated, amended, resolved, and adopted as the united program of the party.
4. A constitution to be adopted that will determine the structure of the party.
5. Development of a call to the convention to be sent to 65,000 local unions.

Those attending the meeting, Mazzocchi said, "must be elected union officials or union staff members."

Most of those attending the meeting were, in fact, elected local union officials, although the requirements for attendance were not enforced and everyone who came was admitted without any inspection of credentials.

Although there were no votes taken at the meeting, Mazzocchi asked for all participants to express their opinions on the questions which the invitation had placed before the meeting. It was clear there was general agreement on the perspective of a call for a convention, and the proposed committees were formed on a volunteer basis. There was some grumbling about the fact that no votes were taken at the meeting, but Mazzocchi explained that he was not willing to agree to this because he believed the body had no authority to make decisions in advance of a delegated convention.

Under the circumstances this ruling was accepted without any determined opposition. Whatever concerns may have existed about the lack of formal democratic procedures, it was clear that only Mazzocchi and his close

collaborators could have called the meeting and only they had the ability to enable the process they were proposing to advance further. Although nearly all of the meeting participants were local union officers, with only a few exceptions they were attending simply as interested individuals with no particular mandate from their organizations.

Mazzocchi, former secretary-treasurer of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW), is now special assistant to the union's president, Robert Wages, who was in attendance at the meeting along with other OCAW international officers. OCAW has been the primary source of institutional support within the official union movement for the LPA initiative. OCAW, at its international conventions, has endorsed LPA and issued LPA organizing packets to all its local unions. Wages has spoken out forcefully on the need for the formation of a union-based labor party.

Also present at the meeting was Amy Newell, secretary treasurer of the United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers Union (UE), which has been on record for many years for the formation of a labor party and which has taken a favorable attitude toward LPA. The San Francisco Central Labor Council (AFL-CIO) recently adopted a resolution favoring a labor party and created a committee to promote the idea within their affiliated local unions. The chairperson of that committee was in attendance at the Chicago meeting and spoke strongly in favor of LPA's work.

These unions continue to primarily endorse and support Democratic Party candidates, and supported Bill Clinton's campaign for president in 1992. None have endorsed or initiated campaigns by independent labor candidates.

Nevertheless, their presence at this meeting, and their support for LPA, along with the formation of LPA itself 3 years ago, is the first real *action* in support of a labor party that has come from any credible sector of the U.S. union movement in at least 40 years.

Whatever the limitations of LPA, and they are of course many, the fact remains that the October 9 meeting is the first gathering of national scope attended by a significant number of people with real credentials in the union movement for the purpose of doing something to advance the prospects of a labor party in the U.S. since the period just after the end of World War II. And the fact that the meeting agreed, with promised support from OCAW, to issue a direct appeal to 65,000 local unions to participate in the formation of

a labor party in early 1995 is an audacious step and an indication that the LPA initiative has not run its course.

Just this step alone, if it takes place as projected, could be expected to generate widespread controversy and discussion within U.S. unions, and it would help place the question of a labor party more prominently before the labor movement, whatever the immediate results.

The discussion at the meeting demonstrated that while there is support for the general idea that there should be a mass labor party in the U.S. to challenge the political monopoly of the Republicans and Democrats, and that it should and must find its primary base of support in the unions, there is no clear consensus on what such a party would look like, how it would come about, and how it would function.

Although every major industrial country in the world except the U.S. and South Africa has some kind of mass party of labor, largely financed and controlled by the existing unions, there was hardly any reference in the discussion to these parties, including the New Democratic Party of Canada, to which most Canadian affiliates of U.S.-based "international" unions belong.

Although it is apparent that these parties are generally in eclipse throughout most of the industrial world, this was not the primary reason that their experiences, or even their existence, found little acknowledgment in the discussion, in my opinion. It is, rather, a demonstration of how deeply the insularity and ignorance which characterize American politics penetrate into the labor movement, even among those with leftist backgrounds, who were the predominant participants at the Chicago meeting. Mazzocchi did state that LPA intended to send visitors to Great Britain to seek to learn more about the functioning of an existing labor party, and he indicated, in response to a question, that he was also interested in the experience of the Brazilian Workers Party.

The central question raised implicitly by the initiatives of LPA was addressed, if at all, only indirectly. That is, what relation is projected for this proposed party with the existing unions? The historic form of mass labor parties of this century has been that of parties controlled by a political federation of most, if not all, of the existing unions. (There have of course been important exceptions, especially the Communist parties of France and Italy, which unquestionably had mass support in their respective working classes, even major-

ity support in certain periods. These parties, however, are in deep and irremediable crisis, and their experience has no immediate relevance for a broad-based discussion of independent labor political action in the U.S. at this point.)

The power of the labor party idea is that it is transitional — that is, it adapts the class struggle idea of the political independence of the working class to existing consciousness and provides a vehicle for its realization based on existing mass-based working class institutions — that is, unions.

The question posed by LPA's initiatives is this: Given that there is no reason to expect that in the immediate future U.S. unions, or any substantial minority of them (including OCAW, UE, and the San Francisco Labor Council), are going to take steps to initiate a labor party, what is the prospect for the formation of an authentic mass labor party by attempting to go around them or over the heads of their leaderships, which is inherent in LPA's major proposal — that is, issuing the convention call directly to the 65,000 existing local unions? It is hard to believe that there is any remote possibility for there to be a sufficient response to such a call in the absence of a widespread upsurge of labor struggle and a much more profound economic and political crisis than exists today, although one could certainly develop quite rapidly out of present conditions.

Mazzocchi and his colleagues are not unrealistic visionaries. They are certainly capable of making a similar assessment to the one outlined above. Mazzocchi in fact stated at the Chicago meeting that they did not intend to become objects of ridicule by calling a convention at which there was no significant representation of the U.S. union movement and then declaring that a mass labor party had been formed.

Further, in spite of the real significance of the Chicago meeting as another step in reintroducing the labor party idea in the U.S. union movement, its relatively narrow composition, limited essentially to a small layer of progressive-minded union activists and officials, is an indication that LPA has not been able to advance very far within the union movement since its inception, in spite of support by OCAW and Mazzocchi's wide contacts and credibility.

Some of this could have been improved by better organization and more resources, but the real limitations are objective and reflect the state of the U.S. unions, on the defensive, with largely inactive memberships and saddled with a passive and privileged bureaucracy. Even the attendance at the proposed convention by representatives of one percent of U.S. local unions would be astounding and would send deep tremors through the labor movement — and beyond. This is not likely to happen in early 1995 — unless there is a working class resurgence against the oppressive forces of the employing class, expressed in the policies of the Clinton administration.

Many local unions have no internal life whatsoever (although this can change, as we have seen in the case of the teamsters and the miners). Most locals have little or no independence from their official hierarchies, and there is no prior experience at any level with independent labor candidates (although militant workers can become aggressive and effective candidates very quickly). Given that most international union leaderships can be expected to discourage attendance at such a proposed convention, projecting even a one percent response would be wildly optimistic.

Such obstacles cannot be surmounted by a few mass mailings and a few hundred active supporters. Nevertheless, it is not excluded that a call such as is being proposed could lead to a convention considerably larger than the attendance at the Chicago meeting. There is significant ferment within U.S. unions, unprecedented in the post-World War II period, and the bureaucracy is less capable of policing the ranks than at any previous time, due to its deeply eroded moral and political authority. This is clearly what Mazzocchi and his colleagues would be gambling on if they proceeded to issue this call.

If such a convention did take place, it would essentially have two alternatives before it: (1) to be stillborn as a vehicle for independent political action and live a stunted existence as some sort of pressure group for whatever unions financed and supported it, somewhat like the Conference for Progressive Political Action, formed in the 1920s by the railroad unions, or the American Labor Party in the 1930s, which was a pressure group never intended as an independent political force, but was simply an adjunct of the Democratic Party whose purpose was to channel the working class vote back into the Democratic Party; or (2) to form a more broad-based organization than LPA to seek to popularize the labor party idea.

The real obstacle to the emergence of an authentic mass-based labor party, and the reason why there has historically been such determined and relentless opposition, is that its formation would utterly destabilize the American political system based on the bipartisan capitalist monopoly of politics. It would be both a product of and a stimulus toward new and broader working class struggle. It would be much harder to assimilate into a stable political relationship with the existing order than in the parliamentary systems of government that exist in most of the industrialized world. As Warren Creel wrote in evaluating the experience of the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party (see the reprint of his 1946 article in last month's *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*):

[The experience] refutes the assertion that the two-party system of politics is "natural" to the United States. The two-party system was breached when class issues were raised.... [The experience] gives evidence against the proposition that a national labor party in America, in this period, could settle down into a stable, bureaucratic machine, holding

the workers in line by distributing a few reformist crumbs, like the labor and Socialist parties of Europe.... Labor parties hardened into stable reformist machines in the upswing of capitalism, during a lengthy period when the ruling class had some degree of security and some substantial concessions to offer the workers.

A viable labor party, one that can help develop the understanding that the working class has interests separate, apart from, and opposed to those of the employers and their government and that can therefore contribute to a broader mobilization of the working class in its own interests, cannot simply be another political party more dedicated to the interests of working people than the existing parties. *It has to be a party that advances the idea that workers should represent themselves, that workers should be candidates for public office, that the working class itself can provide the solutions to the permanent crisis of present society — a party that can mobilize the broadest sectors of society in struggle for those objectives.*

We are only at the beginning of this process. A clearer idea of what is involved in the formation and existence of a labor party cannot emerge without experience and active participation in the process. None of the experience, for good or bad, is wasted if it contributes to a broader understanding of what is involved.

It ought to be clear that the development of a labor party cannot be accomplished in one step, or two or three, or that it can come about solely through one organized initiative, such as LPA. If the proposed convention is evaluated in this light, and if it takes the second course rather than the first, it could make a real contribution to the development of independent working class political action. The idea of a labor party is natural and organic to the union movement. The emergence from a segment of the union movement of organized activity seeking to popularize the idea, and seeking some basis for further action, has great significance, no matter that it is relatively modest and preliminary.

Mazzocchi and his collaborators, especially from OCAW, took the historic step some 3 years ago of reintroducing the concept of a labor party into the union movement, thus taking it for the first time in the postwar period beyond the confines of the radical movement. Only some source such as they, emanating from the existing labor movement and carrying real credentials, could have placed this idea on the agenda within the labor movement, even on the present modest scale. They remain the only element within the unions that supports the idea of a labor party, has the authority to materially advance the process, and is prepared to do something about it. This absolutely outweighs the limitations and inadequacies demonstrated by LPA up to this point, and its efforts should be given genuine and energetic support by all who endorse the concept of a labor party. □

# Organizing Southern Workers: Key to Independent Political Action

by Saladin Muhammad

*The following is an edited version of one of two major reports given to the founding conference of the Workers Unity Network, held in Cleveland, Ohio, May 15, 1993. The other report, by Jerry Gordon, appeared in last month's Bulletin in Defense of Marxism.*

The lack of political representation and democracy for African Americans has been fundamental to the racist system of national oppression faced by Blacks throughout the country. Since more African Americans run for, and are being elected and appointed to, public office, it becomes important to have a clear and up-to-date understanding of the demand for Black political power. One which reflects the struggle and thus the political will of the Black majority, the African American working class.

The white power structure is the political expression of the economic power structure. Political and social control by the U.S. economic power structure was established to ensure that laws, policies, and a social logic exist that allows the business interests to operate with minimum accountability to the workers and their communities. Whether it be around decent wages and benefits, workplace safety, environmental protection, housing, health care, or education, huge profits are the bottom line for the corporations, regardless of the human expense.

The racist character of the U.S. white power structure is rooted in the history of the development of the political and economic system of this country. U.S. wars of extermination and expansion against American Indians and Mexicans were the basis for establishing U.S. political rule over the many regions and territories now defined as the United States of America.

The enslavement of African Americans, the selling of them for a profit, and forcing them to work as free labor, was the main basis for developing the U.S. national economy. Thus, the forging of the U.S. national identity, of its collective sense of nationality and culture as a determining factor for citizenship at the time of the founding of the United States of America, in effect established white skin as a requirement, and as a social privilege over all nonwhites. The white power structure symbolizes the highest expression of white skin privilege and white supremacy. Thus, there can be no real political democracy for African Americans as long as they lack access to political power. The denial of Black political representation within government bodies has been a major feature expressing the undemocratic character of the U.S. political system.

Black political representation has been a major demand by the African American liberation movement. It has been more than a

demand aimed at enforcing and expanding Black civil rights in order to accommodate racial integration within an oppressive system. Highlighted by the periods of Reconstruction in the 1860s and Black Power in the 1960s, the winning of areas of governmental power has been viewed as an important factor in altering the balance of political power in favor of African American people's struggle for self-determination.

The African American liberation movement is thus the political embodiment of Black people's struggles for economic justice, social progress, and political power. It ties together these mass struggles and the many organizations, institutions, and individuals associated with them as a collective revolutionary force struggling against the system of U.S. imperialism. These are continuous struggles to transform and reorganize society.

In order to advance the struggle for African American liberation, Black political power must distinguish itself from the white power structure by its methods of political leadership and democracy, by the types of class and oppressed nationality alliances and coalitions it builds among the people, and by the social and economic policies it tries to establish.

While seeking to abolish the racist system of national oppression, the demand for Black power must also seek to incorporate the African American people and the working class in a configuration of democratic mass organizations and institutions that not only strengthens today's struggles against African American national oppression but also prefigures the governmental and mass forms of self-determination and workers' power necessary for establishing the new political, economic, and social relationships of a nonoppressive, nonexploitive, and nonsexist democratic society.

The division of the working class within a segregated and racist society has created a different social consciousness between the African American and white communities. This has been sharpest in the South, because of the long history of African American slavery in the region. Within the white communities white skin privilege has shaped the social consciousness, and thus racism prevails as a deeply rooted social ideology, affecting not only racial consciousness but also class consciousness. Many white workers have been



conditioned to believe that U.S. capitalism will always protect their interests.

White skin privilege meant that many white organizations were formed in order to access their societal privileges and, during economic crises, to protect those privileges. Organizations among Black people, on the other hand, developed to fight for social and political rights, for economic access, and during economic crises, to defend basic rights.

These social divisions therefore helped to shape and sustain the political divisions still existing today in many ways between the Black and white communities.

These political differences also show themselves from the standpoint of the degree of support of these communities for the workers' struggle. For example, many churches and social organizations within the African American communities support the organized activities carried out among workers on their jobs, including union organizing campaigns. This is one of the main reasons why it has been easier for Black workers to begin the process of building workers' organization and unionization in the South, especially nearing the end and following the civil rights period.

On the other hand, this support for workers is very rare in the white communities. White workers treated unfairly at work where no union exists must either accept such treatment or seek out the support of workplace committees built by Black workers. Some white workers are joining these workplace committees for this very reason. Some are starting for the first time to understand and



challenge the racism around various social issues in their communities. This is key to building the unity of the working class and breaking the stranglehold of racism in white communities, especially in the South.

Black political power must fight to open up the political process. This will help people to see the real politics of capitalism, beyond its racist form. It will also help people to see the need for reorganizing and changing the political system in ways that unite and empower Black and poor people to directly contribute to the shaping and making of the political decisions affecting their lives. Not an easy task!

Campaigns to elect Black officials must therefore be based on a clear program which is democratically developed by the people themselves. The candidates must come out of the mass struggles, which they pledge to continue and are held accountable to once in office.

This is different from electing Blacks who seek to position themselves in order to bargain directly with the economic white power structure. The latter will not bring about more democracy and power for Black people. It will amount to the using of Black faces as promoters of the policies of the white power structure. When Black officials promote the same policies as the white power structure they negatively affect all workers; it further confuses and triggers the racist fears among whites about the meaning of Black political power. This is not to suggest that the burden for white racism should now be placed on the shoulders of Black political officials.

The Democratic and Republican parties tie people to political policies and processes that exploit and manipulate the racist fears associated with the racist political and social organization of society. They will not facilitate the development of a political program to empower African Americans to achieve national liberation. Nor will they unite and empower working class and poor people of all races, nationalities, and sexes around a program for radical social change. Such power and unity would be a threat to the corporate interests behind those parties.

Even around rules governing the electoral process like at-large voting districts, second primaries, setting up African American majority local and congressional districts, voter registration, assigning polling places, or ballot access requirements, the Democratic and Republican parties exploit racist fears to keep the people divided. Within the primaries of both parties and between the parties during the general elections, catchwords and appeals are used to manipulate racist fears among whites as a way of protecting the status quo.

The meaning of Black political power will remain distorted and be undermined as long as the campaigns for Black political representation are conducted through the Democratic Party. This will also be true if they are centered around a personality or strategy to

broker with the Democrats or Republicans. Brokering with these parties usually means starting out with a progressive program but ending up compromising key parts of it in order to gain political concessions from those parties.

Progressive Black candidates who run as Democrats or Republicans help keep African Americans tied to those parties. Their campaigns and progressive platforms keep people confused about the real anti-working class, racist, and sexist politics of those parties. They also help to legitimize the line of the white power structure, which suggests that candidates not running on their party tickets, but as independents, are somehow not legitimate or electable.

However, these progressive officials are not the enemy, and must be won over to independent political action. We must find ways of working with them in independent mass coalitions outside of the electoral campaigns. These coalitions must attempt to involve the many social organizations living within the electoral districts of these candidates. Various expressions of independent political action can and must be developed through these coalitions. Over time, this will help to politicize and reorganize these areas in a way that may convince these candidates to become truly independent. If not, they may lose the support of these constituencies by virtue of their conscious independent political activities. We must also encourage and agitate for them to fight for progressive policies in their various current political capacities.

There have been at least two important national attempts at building independent political action taken by the African American liberation movement over the past 20 years: the formation of the National Black Assembly (NBA) out of Gary, Indiana, in 1972; and the formation of the National Black Independent Political Party (NBIPP) in 1980.

The NBA comprised all of the major struggles and political tendencies within the African American liberation movement. It was a continuation of the National Black United Front Movement originating out of the National Black Power Conferences begun in the mid-1960s. The NBA's main focus was the development of a political platform (the National Black Political Agenda): to help launch a movement to get African American candidates elected and appointed to public office; and to serve as a way of holding progressive candidates accountable to the needs of the Black community. Local Black Assemblies often held conventions which endorsed candidates based on the NBA platform. This included local candidates running as independents. But most of the candidates were Democrats. The NBA had an "inside-outside" strategy of supporting progressive Black Democrats in the primaries and, if they lost, of running an independent for the same seat in the general elections.

Rank-and-file Black workers lacked a program and organized identity within the NBA. The most outspoken Black trade unionists involved were mainly union officials, who echoed the AFL-CIO line of "critical" support for the Democratic Party. The refusal to break with the Democratic Party was a major factor causing the demise of the NBA.

NBIPP was launched by a small element remaining in the leadership of the dying NBA. The call for the formation of the NBIPP was an attempt to break with the loyal oppositionist (pro-Democratic Party) politics practiced by the NBA. The NBIPP had a "top down" bureaucratic approach to party building. It was centered around the creation of an organizational "Charter" that sought to outline the basis for party membership and structure in preparation for a founding party convention. NBIPP was not connected to any mass campaigns or issues affecting the African American community. It became riddled with bureaucratic and ultra-left factional maneuvering and strife; and its red-baiting restricted organizational rights for NBIPP members belonging to communist and socialist parties. Black workers also lacked a program and organized identity in NBIPP.

Unfortunately, both NBA and NBIPP's visions of political power were limited to the electoral arena. Consequently, without political candidates, these formations were unable to provide the African American people with consistent political leadership around a strategy for winning a more mass-based Black political power. We see that both the meaning of, and the fight for, self-determination are distorted and weakened when they are restricted to the electoral arena and objectives.

The National Rainbow Coalition was another important development. It was a united front of people's struggles. Key connections were forged between the different oppressed nationalities and working class struggles embodied in the Rainbow. It was an important strategic alliance for uniting and mounting a mass fight-back against the corporate and racist political attacks on the trade unions, the working class, and oppressed peoples' movements. It should have maintained its independence from the Democratic Party. Instead it attempted to constitute itself as a political bloc within the Democratic Party. As a result the Rainbow's mass character as a strategic alliance has not survived.

To make the struggle for Black political power more mass-based and stronger as a democratizing force, it must have more of a working class program and leadership. This means that African American workers must bring forward their organized identity and class demands to help shape the social and political content and character of this movement, including the politics and character of a strategic alliance with other progressive movements. *Continued on page 45*

# The Need for a Mass Workers' Party

by Neville Alexander

*The following article recently appeared in a South African newspaper. The author, now chairman of the Workers Organization of South Africa (WOSA), was held for many years as a political prisoner on Robben Island, along with Nelson Mandela and others.*

**B**ecause of the desperate innuendo in Jeremy Cronin's article on the workers' party (*The Weekly Mail*, July 23 to 29, 1993) to the effect that the promoters of the mass workers' party are the dupes, or perhaps even the agents of the National Intelligence Service and possibly other forces, I should like to restate clearly the case for the workers' party.

In all modern capitalistic states [except the U.S.] workers are organized in political parties of their choice. In very few of them incidentally are workers organized in only one particular party. Workers, like other normal human beings, have different opinions about how best to attain their goals. Hence they belong to different parties.

In most countries where a strong socialist and Marxist tradition exists, workers tend to support specifically workers' parties as opposed to parties that are committed to upholding the bourgeois capitalist status quo. At various times in Europe and elsewhere, this specifically worker-associated role has been played by social democratic, labor, and communist parties. In many European countries today social democratic and communist or ex-communist parties compete with one another for the workers' allegiance. For reasons that cannot be discussed in this article, most of these parties have tended eventually to become simply a left-wing or radical version of the status quo parties.

In South Africa between 1928 and 1950 roughly, the South African Communist Party (SACP) had acquired the status of the party of the workers in spite of its tiny membership and the fact that the majority of black workers were organized in one or another multi-class black nationalist organization, mainly the African National Congress (ANC), because of the facts of racial oppression and the exclusion of the black people from power in the segregationist white minority state.

After 1953, and definitely after 1960, the SACP tied itself firmly to the ANC and its allied structures. This was explained in terms of the now forgotten theory of colonialism of a special type and its strategic corollary of a two-stage revolution. In terms of this theory/strategy, the ANC was to lead the first stage of the revolution against "apartheid" while the SACP would lead the second stage against "capitalism."

In effect, however, this simply meant that the SACP was formally abandoning its his-

toric mission of leading the workers in their struggle against capitalist exploitation, at least during the "first stage," which could conceivably last for centuries. Indeed, what stage have we reached now, we cannot cease to wonder. Never mind. As the left wing of a multi-class, essentially middle-class, alliance, the SACP was in both theory and practice putting a limit on the development and explosive potential of the workers' movement.

Usually, the interests or preoccupation of the middle classes would — and did — prevail, as we see all too clearly now in the present negotiations. This is justified in terms of "realism," "politics is the art of the possible," "politics is about power," and so forth. Those who oppose such opportunism are immediately decried as "utopian" and "Trotskyites," earlier even more egregiously as "fascists." This was the fate of Comrade Joe Forster and his friends in FOSATU (the Fed-

eration of South African Trade Unions) at the end of the 1970s, when they dared to argue for the formation of an independent workers' movement as the political culmination of the explosion in trade union and labor organization in that period. This is the fate of those who now call for an independent workers' party, since calling them "fascists" and "Trotskyites" would be considered a bad joke today, they are "condemned" as Niel Barnard's men and women.

This descent into the gutter only defiles those who write such piffle. The mass workers' party is indeed an idea whose time has come. This is so simply because the black nationalist element of the national liberation movement has run its course. It has "taken its stand on capitalism," in Rosa Luxemburg's profound formulation.

It has agreed (in the present negotiations)

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## WOSA Press Statement, July 12, 1993

At a special delegates' conference on July 10–11, 1993, held in Johannesburg, the WOSA resolved to launch the following program of action:

- In consultation with a broad range of progressive organizations and in line with its resolutions at the Easter Conference (1993), to vigorously promote and support the formation of a Mass Workers' Party. Only an independent Mass Workers' Party can halt and reverse the wholesale compromise of the interests of the working class by the negotiators at the World Trade Centre.
- WOSA is satisfied that the elections will *not* be for the Constituent Assembly as defined by WOSA itself and, until recently, by all major formations in the national liberation movement. Instead of a popular people's assembly deliberating on an open agenda which would permit the consideration of all the fundamental questions of South African life, the people will be called upon to vote for a constitution-making body whose agenda has essentially been predetermined by the unelected Kempton Park negotiators.
- The main purpose of these elections will be to crown the process of negotiations for power-sharing by electing a so-called government of national unity. A government of national unity will result in continued restrictions and attacks on working-class organizations, higher unemployment, lower living standards, the persistence of orchestrated violence, racism, and discrimination against women. The concessions and compromises made by the negotiators at the Kempton Park talks will ensure that a minority will continue to wield their power and wealth, together with a small layer of the black elite.
- WOSA, together with its allies, will use the election campaign to promote the Mass Workers' Party and to expose the unprincipled pro-middle class compromises now being hatched at the World Trade Centre.
- The platform for such a Mass Workers' Party will revolve around basic working-class demands. These demands include jobs for all, a living wage, no retrenchment, free education and health care, decent housing, women's rights, self-defense, and environmental issues. Such demands can only be met if the commanding heights of the economy are nationalized under workers' control. While we believe the negotiation process is a deception, large numbers of our people look to the elections to address their concrete problems.

# South Africa Today and Tomorrow

by Neville Alexander

*The following article first appeared in the Idasa Journal: Democracy in Action, July 1993.*

In the space at my disposal, I can do no more than sketch the vectors of development that determine the shape of things as they are in our country today and as they will be tomorrow. There are a few significant facts which, if stated clearly, help to make sense of a picture that often seems puzzling, demoralizing, and even threatening.

First, the historic compromise between white and black nationalism is unavoidable because it is the main precondition for the regeneration of the capitalist system in this country. The segregationist and apartheid socio-political piston-casing in which the system was able to tick over until the mid-seventies, more or less, has simply run out of steam. Overtly racist policies have become dysfunctional to the generation of profit, by and large. Hence, "nonracial" frameworks have to be established. The economic consequences of this reformist strategy are said to be dramatic, at least in theory. Job creation, the widening of the domestic market for processed and manufactured goods, the opening of export markets, the availability of direct foreign investments and long-term loans, and so forth. This is what business and many of the trade unions expect to happen as one of the main results of the compromise. Hence, all of them are in one degree or another pushing in the direction of a negotiated settlement. Barring unforeseeable circumstances, nothing will prevent that settlement, even though the road that leads to it will become increasingly rough and bumpy as the goal of a settlement comes closer.

Second, the "settlement" will be an elite cartel. It is an agreement between white and black middle-class and upper-class elites to govern the country along "nonracial, democratic" lines without changing the fundamentals of the economy and the society. All the apartheid laws will be repealed, thus, removing skin color as the measure of real or potential power, status, and opportunity. But as money (class) becomes the main measure of "success" and power, the millions of rural and urban poor — essentially the semi-skilled and unskilled black workers and their families — will remain exactly where they are today. Indeed, because of the disastrous economic context in which the transition from "apartheid" to "democracy" is taking place, many of these people will be much worse off than they are today. To use a now well-known metaphor: the scaffolding of the apartheid laws can now be removed because the house of racial inequality, thanks to colonialism, segregation, and apartheid, stands on firm foundations. Capitalism in South Africa will

continue to reproduce class inequality essentially in the form of racial inequality.

Of course, the negotiators try to counter this charge by saying in unison that they are committed to "redistribution," "affirmative action"; some even talk about "historical redress." With due respect, quite apart from the problem of the economic literacy of these ladies and gentlemen, their promises of heaven if not exactly tomorrow, then perhaps the day-after-tomorrow, are no more than election tales full of sound and fury signifying nothing. They remind one of recent American presidents who promise to reduce taxes before they are elected and promptly raise them the day after their electoral victory.

Third, we are moving into a period of unprecedented violence. The insubstantiality of the fairy tales about a "peaceful" settlement, later qualified as a "relatively peaceful" transition, has been confirmed by contemporary history itself. Those of us who predicted the present explosions were often treated as madmen who traded in gloom-and-doom scenarios. Well, we have to be even more brutally frank. The electioneering attempts by both N.P. [the ruling National Party — eds.] and ANC politicians to trivialize the right-wing threat could turn out to be the most treacherous aspect of the present transition. Remember Hitler in the Weimar Republic. People who should have known better ignored his bluster and genocidal ravings until it was too late. It is the depth of folly to disarm our people by projecting a tough-guy image of the "democratic forces." When Viljoen, Hartzenberg, Terreblanche, and their ilk warn about civil war, wisdom should tell us not to ignore them. They will almost certainly not be able to overthrow the present, or the next, regime in a counterrevolutionary coup d'état, but they can (and I believe they will) destabilize the negotiations process and launch post-negotiations terror campaigns that could last for many years.

Under the present circumstances, it is still worth recalling the old Roman adage: if you want peace, prepare for war. It is a matter of some amusement to me that liberal theorists who used to misrepresent Marxists as claiming that racial ideology had no causal significance, today trivialize or ignore completely the reality of racist beliefs and practices as a socio-political force which has a certain measure of autonomy. It is not the first time that political expediency has blinded a generation of otherwise enlightened people. It is necessary to restate that the legacy of racism in South Africa is like that of slavery in America or that of caste in India. It is a historic

phenomenon, not some episodic nothing that can be talked away by men in suits and ties around a table in Johannesburg.

Thousands of people have died since February 1990. Tens of thousands more are going to die before even the "limited democracy" now being negotiated at the World Trade Centre (are the mercantilist context and discourse a coincidence?) is attained. Whatever election takes place under these circumstances will certainly be neither free nor fair, but for most South Africans the crucial factor will be the fact that a one-person-one-vote election is due to take place. Nobody who has any insight into the murk of the negotiations process can doubt that the "constituent assembly" that is being created in the World Trade Centre will be toothless, since all the major issues will have been decided by the group of (unelected) men and women at Kempton Park, however representative they may or may not be of their specific constituencies. Again, the real process that will take place around whatever constituent assembly comes out of the negotiations will not simply be determined by the paper agreements made at Kempton Park. As in France in 1789, the grievances of the people are so grave that parliamentary decorum and tidy gentlemen's agreements may not be able to prevent the tide of grassroots agitation from surging into the corridors of power.

Whatever happens, and this is the fourth salient consideration, the transition will be effected only by a "strong" government, one that can range from the extreme of open military rule to a situation where a group of well-known political figures rule as a kind of Directorate leaning on the military apparatuses. Only the willfully blind do not "see" that this is the only way in which the transition can be made, while leaving most of "the main players" untouched, so to speak. It is the only way in which the present ruling group, and the owners of large capitals in particular, can effect the changes needed to render the system as a whole once again profitable without opening up space for either a social revolution by black workers and other oppressed strata, on the one hand, or for a counterrevolution by "yesterday's men" and other disaffected constituencies, on the other hand. The implications of this proposition are serious but only too real.

Finally, the media inevitably focus on Kempton Park and on some of "the main actors." To the informed, it is often difficult to suppress the feeling that behind the farce that is being acted out in the foreground, the

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# WOSA and Socialism

by Tom Ranuga

*The author, a South African/Azanian now living in exile in the United States, is a supporter of WOSA. The following text is a chapter from his forthcoming book on South Africa.*

The Workers Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA) was founded on April 14, 1990, in Cape Town. The formation of this new organization on the left brought together a number of independent socialist organizations and individuals from different parts of the country. Many of the founding members were active in the National Forum (NF), which was formed as a broad alternative to the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983. The UDF was a populist front of the African National Congress (ANC), and the National Forum was made up of Black Consciousness organizations and socialist groups that shared a common dislike of the moderate approach of the ANC. The National Forum contained groupings with different ideological perspectives, and WOSA developed out of a split between Black Consciousness elements led by the Azanian People's Organization (Azapo) and the Cape Action League and its allies, mainly the Transvaal-based Action Youth and the Uppington-based Mayibuye. These were the main organizations that merged to form WOSA, including Students of Young Azania (SOYA).

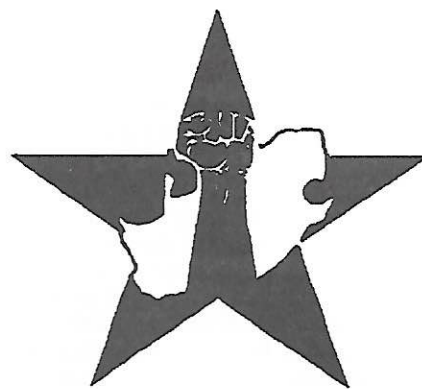
Many members of WOSA have roots in the Unity Movement of South Africa and were also ideologically influenced by Trotskyism, which has a long tradition in South Africa, particularly in the Western Cape, a solid base of left-wing opposition groups. Although many of the members of WOSA were schooled in the ideas of Trotsky and of the Fourth International, there were a number of other socialists in the organizations who did not have that background.<sup>1</sup> The contribution of Trotskyists, however, to the evolution of radical ideas in South Africa was an important one. As Allison Drew points out with regard to the origins of Trotskyism in South Africa and attempts to build a working-class party, Trotskyists in South Africa "were able to promote and popularize the principle of non-collaboration, which, through the efforts of the Non-European Unity Movement in the 1940s and '50s, would provide a significant counter to the influence of the African National Congress and allied groups."<sup>2</sup> The principle of non-collaboration has had a tremendous impact on the political perspective taken by WOSA to the liberation struggle.

### The Black Working Class

The distinctive role of WOSA within the broad liberation movement lies in the great emphasis it puts on the crucial contribution of the Black working class to the liberation struggle. Whereas the traditional emphasis of left-wing organizations in South Africa, which were dominated by whites, was on the role of the working class as a whole in the fight against capitalist exploitation, WOSA leaves absolutely no doubt that it is the Black working class that is destined to play a revolutionary role in the liberation struggle. It is the Black working class that has the greatest revolutionary potential because of its position within the oppressive and exploitative system of racial capitalism in South Africa.

The position of WOSA therefore represents a major departure from the traditional perspective of white socialists and communists in South Africa who seemed not to understand or simply deemphasized the crippling role of white racism within the working class. According to these socialists and communists, the white and Black sections of the working class were destined to be united against capitalist exploitation because the obstacles to unity created by white racism would eventually be destroyed by the sheer force of economic development. As Allison Drew points out with regard to the Workers' Party of South Africa (WPSA) and the Communist League of South Africa (CLSA), the emphasis these organizations, along with the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), placed on the need for a united working-class movement consisting of Black and white workers "underestimated both the enduring racism of the white working class and the material basis for that racism."<sup>3</sup>

The white workers were not only adamantly refusing to give up their privileged position for the greater good of Black-white working-class unity or the democratic rights of Black people as a whole, but white socialist leaders themselves failed to deal firmly with white racism. Whatever the efforts of those leaders to convince white workers that they shared the same interests with Black workers there was no socialist tendency in South Africa that "went beyond rhetorical calls for racial unity to offer a practical program for working-class mobilization which rejected racial concessions to whites."<sup>4</sup>



The truth of the matter is that Black workers have always played a major role in the economic development of South Africa. Before World War II they were needed primarily as unskilled and semiskilled workers, but after the war, through the 1960s and beyond, changes in the economy needed more semiskilled and skilled workers. The economic engine simply could not run without the Black working class. In other words, the "Black working class, in short, has become the most important part of South African society." And since the 1960s and especially after the 1973 Durban strikes, "this class has been involved in many important economic and political struggles against the ruling class."<sup>5</sup>

Black workers have led the fight for higher wages and better working conditions. They have participated in the ongoing community struggles against the apartheid system and have always taken part in the political struggle for national liberation. In the economic sphere they have been led by their trade-union organizations such as COSATU and NACTU and other independent or non-aligned unions. In community and political struggles they have been led by populist organizations such as the ANC, PAC [Pan-African Congress], and Azapo [Azanian People's Organization]. The South African Communist Party, as an ally of the ANC and acting under the Charterist banner [i.e., limiting itself to the demands of the ANC's 1955 "Freedom Charter"], has not been able to demonstrate an independent leadership of the working class.

After the formation of left-wing organizations such as the Cape Action League and Action Youth in 1983-1985, which advocated socialist solutions in South Africa, efforts were made by these organizations to create an independent political organization of workers. This would be an organization that "specifically voices the demands and promotes the interests of the black working class..." The formation of WOSA as "the voice of the workers of South Africa" was the culmination of these collective efforts to establish an "organization of the workers, and for the workers, which is controlled by the workers."<sup>6</sup>

## A Socialist Society

The constitutional aims and objectives of the Workers Organization for Socialist Action made it crystal clear that the founders were committed to the realization of a socialist society in which power would reside in the working class. The first and major aim of the new organization was to fight nationally to establish a democratic socialist society where "the means of production will be owned and controlled by, and in the interest of, the working class and for the benefit of society as a whole."<sup>7</sup> Members of WOSA would be required to do work in all progressive and grassroots organizations "to ensure that working-class demands are raised consistently and the struggle for socialism is seen as the only alternative to the present system of racial capitalism."<sup>8</sup>

Racial capitalism in South Africa, which developed as a result of centuries of dispossession and the formation of the master-servant relations throughout the country, had as its main feature a top capitalist class of powerful white men and women who controlled all the means of production, distribution, and exchange. The second feature of the system is a bottom layer of millions of Black workers who suffer from racial oppression and capitalist exploitation. The division of the working class between "Black" and "white" workers gave rise to a strong conviction on the part of Black workers that their oppression and exploitation had a lot to do with the fact that they were Black workers. It is for this reason that WOSA would insist that it is "the Black working class — and not simply some abstract 'working class' — that leads the struggle for equal democratic rights in South Africa."<sup>9</sup> White communist and socialist leaders pontificated and dreamed about a united working class, but the lessons of history indicate quite clearly that "the white working class has shown that it is prepared to defend the system of racial capitalism, apartheid, and white minority rule, with arms in hand to the bitter end."<sup>10</sup>

In the struggle against racial capitalism and for a socialist society WOSA takes the position that the two-stage theory of the South African revolution as advocated by the Charterist movement and the South African Communist Party is misleading. According to this theory, the South African system is defined as colonialism of a special kind on the grounds that both the oppressive white people (i.e., the internal colonial power) and the oppressed Black people live in the same country. The first stage of the struggle would therefore be anticolonial in nature, in that it is aimed at getting rid of racial discrimination or apartheid. This "first stage," whose goal is the establishment of "national democracy," would be led by the ANC. The "second stage," which is aimed at the creation of a socialist society, will be led by the SACP.

The artificial separation of the South African struggle into two stages generated con-

siderable criticism, which the SACP tried to avoid by suggesting that there is actually no break between the two stages because there is an "uninterrupted process."<sup>11</sup> The perspective of WOSA is that the halfway house which is supposed to be the state of "national democracy" will in fact remain a permanent situation, because the working class will have abdicated leadership to the Black middle class and its liberal and capitalist allies. These groups, like their counterparts in the advanced capitalist world, will simply not allow the working class to overthrow the democratic capitalist state. The struggle in South Africa is therefore against racial capitalism which is perpetuated by the white capitalist class and its allies. Racial capitalism must be replaced by a democratic socialist system, which is "only possible if the national liberation struggle is led by the Black working class organized in independent political organizations." The two-stage theory must therefore be rejected, because in South Africa the struggle is not only for building a new nation but also for the total destruction of class inequality. WOSA therefore takes the position that "from the point of view of the Black working class [and under its leadership], the struggle for national liberation is the struggle for socialism."<sup>12</sup>

WOSA is opposed to the artificial separation of apartheid or racial oppression from capitalism or economic exploitation. It believes that, despite the fall of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, Marxism is still very relevant today. The bureaucratic degeneration that was associated with the totalitarian states of Eastern Europe has nothing to do with the relevance of Marxism. It is not socialism/Marxism that found itself in crisis when the bureaucratic centralist states of Eastern Europe collapsed, but Stalinism, which emptied Marxism of its revolutionary content and reduced it to a hollow shell. WOSA is convinced of the importance of socialism and believes that "the renovation of Marxism requires the reviewing of its critical dimension, its enrichment with the contributions of new social movements...and the enrichment of the most advanced and most productive forms of non-Marxist theoretical thought..."<sup>13</sup>

In spite of the collapse of Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe, socialism has a future in South Africa. Blacks in that country are experiencing the brutal national oppression and economic exploitation that they associate with a racist capitalist system. It is that stark reality that "continues to provide an objective base for the flourishing of anti-capitalist and pro-socialist ideas and movements."<sup>14</sup> The fight for a socialist South African society will, however, be a challenging one, given the current configuration of forces within the country and the damage that has been done globally to the socialist cause by Stalinist regimes.

The prospects for socialism may be jeopardized in the short term, but in the medium

to long term WOSA believes that the future of socialism is assured because of "the continued class struggle that arises out of the inherent contradictions of capitalism."<sup>15</sup> The system will continue its attacks on wages, and millions of workers will lose their jobs in the interest of profits. Social inequality in the world will grow, and millions of people in the so-called Third World will continue to be subjected to a miserable existence by capitalism and imperialism. These are the inherent contradictions of capitalism that will ensure the continued growth and eventual triumph of socialism in South Africa. WOSA, however, takes the position that in the short term a socialist society in South Africa is not a realistic expectation. The main reasons relate to the fact that "the working class is not yet unified, conscious, and strong enough to act decisively against the bourgeoisie." The capitalist state still commands the most powerful army on the African continent, and "the revolutionary socialist organizations that do exist are still small and relatively weak."<sup>16</sup>

WOSA, therefore, would argue that it is one thing to have a socialist vision, but quite another to translate that vision immediately into a successful socialist revolution. It does not serve any useful purpose to talk about the imminence of a socialist victory in the near future when the objective situation in South Africa and the world at large will not allow it. Unlike 1917, when the world situation made it possible for a well-organized working-class revolution to take place in Russia, the state of the world today is quite different. The world socialist movement is by no means completely defeated, but it is undoubtedly on the defensive.

In South Africa the politics of negotiations will see to it that the Black middle class is coopted into sharing power with the white ruling class in defense of the interests of capital. A national democratic state will most likely be established within the framework of the same capitalist system. But to face those facts does not mean that the fight for socialism should be given up or deferred to some later post-apartheid second stage. The present racial capitalist system provides political space for a revolutionary socialist movement by dint of its oppressive and inherently exploitative nature. Revolutionary socialists have their work cut out for them now, but they should not indulge themselves in unrealistic dreams about a socialist victory in the near future. As Dr. Neville Alexander so aptly pointed out in a presentation to the Organization of South Africans/Azansians for Liberation Education (OSAALÉ):

What it does mean is that those who are committed to a revolutionary struggle in South Africa must be clear in their minds that we have to have a long-term vision, that we have to accept that it is a long march. We have to try to see what are the things that must be done in the short to medium term.<sup>17</sup>

What this means for WOSA is that in the short to medium term the strategic position of

the working class must be strengthened by continuing with the class struggle as an alternative to the negotiation process. The fight for the independence of the working class must continue and all necessary steps should be taken to build combative working-class organizations on the shop floor and in the community at large. National campaigns must be mounted, and the organization must put forward a program of mass action for fundamental social reforms relating to comprehensive health care, a living wage, decent housing, employment, and education for all in order to tip the balance of power in favor of the working class and the Black population in general. The organization must also fight and campaign vigorously for a Constituent Assembly, which is viewed by WOSA as the only legitimate means of creating a new constitution.

### The Constituent Assembly

The fight for a Constituent Assembly must be linked to the mass campaigns for the day-to-day concrete demands of the people for a qualitatively better life.<sup>18</sup> WOSA does not reject negotiations on principle, but is adamantly opposed to the [specific] negotiation process in South Africa on the grounds that, while the white minority government is prepared to get rid of racial laws on the statute books and introduce some form of universal franchise, it will not grant majority rule. The white rulers will insist on minority rights or veto power for whites in order to ensure that economic power and privilege remain in the hands of the white capitalist class and its allies. Negotiations with the white rulers "cannot deliver the national democratic demands, never mind the social or proletarian demands, that have come to occupy a central place in the liberation struggle."<sup>19</sup>

WOSA believes that the purpose of [the present] negotiations is to include entities of the liberation movement in a power-sharing deal and that "this controlled reform of apartheid from above is intended to ensure that a socialist revolution from below never occurs."<sup>20</sup> Power in South Africa is in the hands of the white capitalist class, which is in control of the state and the economy. The monopoly corporations of the white capitalist class are in full control of the wealth of the country. WOSA would reject any political settlement which is based on the concept of minority or group rights, because such a settlement would be geared toward the protection and maintenance of white power and privilege. The organization unconditionally supports the democratic demand for one person/one vote in a unitary nonracial South Africa/Azania. However, the only democratic mechanism for the realization of that new society is the Constituent Assembly, which must be based on an unqualified universal franchise.<sup>21</sup>

The road to a democratic South Africa is therefore via the Constituent Assembly,

which is the only instrument that will give every voting person in the country a voice in the process of putting together a new constitution. The demand for a Constituent Assembly is a fundamental demand of the liberation movement for an unqualified universal franchise and will increase the leverage of the working class in the ongoing struggle for workers' power. The process of the Constituent Assembly is also important in that, through political mobilization, it will help to raise the level of consciousness of the masses.<sup>22</sup> It is, however, not "a socialist demand in that it will not in itself lead to working-class power." But, at this stage in the liberation struggle, "the constituent assembly appears as the most democratic means of deciding on the future of the country and as an alternative to any attempt at preserving minority rule."<sup>23</sup>

### The United Front

WOSA, as a revolutionary socialist organization dedicated to the creation of a socialist society, attaches a great deal of importance to the role of a united front in the liberation struggle. Entities of the liberation movement as a whole would be making a big mistake if they went into a negotiation process without a consensus which is forged within the framework of a united front.<sup>24</sup>

The organization is opposed to a process of negotiations leading to power sharing and takes the firm position that "the alternative to negotiations is the creation of a national United Front of all organizations that are committed to the attainment of national liberation and full democratic rights now."<sup>25</sup> The oppressed people need not be resigned to a negotiated settlement "on what are essentially the terms of the ruling class and its imperialist allies," because that process is not inevitable. A fighting alliance of all the organizations of the liberation movement is the alternative which can make a difference and force the white rulers to concede the fundamental democratic demands of the people.<sup>26</sup> A united front would be fully supported by the organization because it is the basis for promoting "the broadest mobilization of the oppressed and exploited people" and also provides the "most favorable conditions for self-organization and the advancing of socialist consciousness."<sup>27</sup>

WOSA would advance the cause of unity without losing sight of its primary responsibility to the working class. This was clearly spelled out in the founding resolution of the organization which stated that WOSA would "give support to national liberation organizations insofar as they advance the struggle against oppression and exploitation, but will at all times strive to put forward working-class interests in the struggle."<sup>28</sup>

WOSA would not support unity that is not based on clearly defined principles and would not work in structures that include collaborationist elements such as the leaders of Bantu-

stans/Homelands and members of the tricameral parliament. The organization declined flatly to participate in the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA), which included not only the ANC and SACP but every political organization that had been an integral part of the apartheid system. WOSA believed that CODESA would not meet the legitimate demands of the oppressed and exploited masses for full and equal democratic rights because "CODESA is fundamentally unrepresentative and undemocratic."<sup>29</sup>

Along the same line of non-collaboration, WOSA rejected the National Peace Accord and issued a pamphlet explaining the real purpose of the accord and the reasons why the organization was so strongly opposed to it. The pamphlet underlined the fact that the accord, which was proclaimed as an agreement to stop violence, was signed by the government of de Klerk, the ANC, the SACP, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), governments of various Bantustans, the Inkatha Freedom Party, parties in the tricameral parliaments, the Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut, and many other conservative organizations. WOSA explained that the meaning of the Peace Accord was for the ANC "to publicly accept Inkatha as a key player in the negotiations process" and to enable the government "to publicly force the ANC into accepting joint responsibility for law and order."<sup>30</sup>

WOSA accordingly condemned the signatories of the Peace Accord associated with entities of the liberation movement and made the critical comment that those "who have signed feel that they have a common interest with the government."<sup>31</sup>

WOSA has explicitly stated that, as a socialist organization, it is committed to the struggle whose major objective is the eradication of racial capitalism and the empowerment of the working class. One of its aims and objectives is to "fight all forms of oppression i.e. racism, tribalism, and sexism."<sup>32</sup> The organization makes it crystal clear that the liberation of women is part and parcel of the "broader struggle to end all forms of oppression to create a humane world." Sexism, just like racism and ethnicity, is "a powerful weapon used by the ruling class to divide and weaken the workers' movement."<sup>33</sup> The founders were in fact able to combine theory and practice because women are very visible and prominent in the leadership and decision-making structures of WOSA.

### Internationalism

As a revolutionary socialist organization, WOSA is committed to the building of an international socialist movement. WOSA maintains that it is the urgent task of all progressive anticapitalist forces in the world to unite "in order rapidly to promote the wave of socialist revolutions which will follow in

*Continued on page 50*

# The Fourth International Faces the Turn of the Century

by Paul Le Blanc

The Fourth International is a worldwide revolutionary socialist organization — the only one of its kind in the world today. Formally established in 1938, after a period of international collaboration among revolutionaries throughout the 1930s, it was severely battered by the Second World War and in some ways even more severely tested by the decades-long Cold War, yet it endured. At the present moment in history it faces perhaps its greatest test. In the present survey we will touch on the historical origins of this international movement, indicate its formal program and structure, and then discuss ways in which the historic orientation of the Fourth International is being challenged by developments unfolding at the end of the 20th century.

## Historical Background

The origins of the Fourth International are in the world Communist movement, which was largely inspired and guided by the Bolshevik party, a revolutionary socialist current. Under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky the Bolsheviks took power in Russia in November 1917, in the midst of World War I and in opposition to that continuing slaughter, which only benefited the rich in the belligerent countries. They established the Soviet republic, by making the world's first successful working class revolution, which they conceived as the beginning of a worldwide socialist revolution. Lenin, Trotsky, and their comrades sought to implement the orientation first advanced by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels seventy years earlier in the *Communist Manifesto*.

It may be worth reminding ourselves of some basic historical facts. Soviets (the Russian word means "councils") were deliberative and decision-making bodies consisting of democratically elected representatives of workers, peasants, and soldiers. The perspectives of the Communist movement at that time involved the establishment of genuine working people's governments throughout the world which would end exploitation by establishing a system of social ownership and democratic planning for the global economy. This would enable each person in society to grow and develop in freedom and dignity.

But such goals of human liberation faced then, and still face today, the bitter opposition of the powerful and wealthy elites who oversee and derive their riches from the functioning of the existing capitalist society. For these goals of worldwide socialist democracy to be realized, the working class must organize itself powerfully through its own trade unions, labor councils, political parties, fac-

tory committees, community organizations, etc., to challenge the domination of the employing class. The workers have the capacity, by their position in society and their strength of organization, to lead and win the struggle against all forms of oppression, to fight for democratic, economic, and social reforms beneficial to the vast majority of the population. As reforms are won, they must be utilized to help the working class prepare for "the final conflict," the taking of political power for the purpose of the socialist transformation of society.

This orientation of the Communists around the time of the Bolshevik revolution was counterposed to the reformist and opportunist perspectives that had become dominant in the Social Democratic movement (organized in the Second, or Socialist, International). In the late 19th century and the years of imperialist expansion leading up to the world war of 1914–18, the dominant elements in the Social Democratic leadership made far-reaching compromises with the capitalists. They became enemies of socialist revolution, to which they counterposed the idea of gradual reform of capitalism, the approach that later led to the capitalist welfare state. Their reconciliation with the capitalist system culminated in the betrayal of working class internationalism at the outbreak of World War I, support by each national Social Democratic leadership for the war effort of its own capitalist class. Many of the socialist internationalists in the Second International, among them Lenin, Trotsky, and Rosa Luxemburg, worked together to establish the Third International in revolutionary opposition to the Social Democratic betrayal. But with the death of Lenin in 1924, the failure of workers' revolutions to triumph outside the Soviet republic, especially the failure of the 1923 German revolution, and the increasingly authoritarian and bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet regime, the world Communist movement itself was wracked by a crisis.

The dominant forces led by Joseph Stalin used much pseudo-Leninist rhetoric to justify a definitive break from the workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism that had characterized the original Bolshevik-Leninist program. Stalin defended the false concept of building "socialism in one country" (the Soviet Union), but in fact what was built was a bureaucratic dictatorship utilizing murderous and totalitarian methods. "Socialism in one country" was also advanced at the expense of revolutionary struggles in other parts of the world, with the Stalinists cyni-

cally using Communist parties of other countries as extensions of the Soviet Union's narrowly conceived, bureaucratic-conservative foreign policy. The Left Opposition led by Trotsky defended early Communism's revolutionary perspectives. Out of this conflict the Fourth International was born.

There are many accounts of these developments. One of the earliest and most valuable has just been republished in paperback: C.L.R. James's *World Revolution, 1917–1936: The Rise and Fall of the Communist International* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1993). This study by James, which first appeared in 1937, gives ample documentation of the fact that the recent global collapse of Communism has its roots in the triumph of Stalinism inside the Soviet Union and the world Communist movement. The collapse hardly demonstrates the bankruptcy of socialism or Marxism, but inevitably flows from the corruption and viciousness represented by Stalinism. The Bolshevik-Leninist banner defended by Trotsky and his co-thinkers symbolizes a genuine alternative. It is this alternative with which the Fourth International is associated.

## Program and Structure

The British supporters of the Fourth International, in preparation for the 1991 World Congress of the Fourth International, made up a useful introductory educational packet which includes the most recent but hard-to-find statutes of that body. Section 1 of those statutes reads as follows:

1. The Fourth International (World Party of Socialist Revolution) is composed of militants who accept and apply its principles and program. Organized in separate national sections, they are united in a single worldwide organization governed by the rules and practices of democratic centralism.

2. The aim of the Fourth International is to help educate and organize the proletariat and its allies in order to abolish capitalism, with its oppression, poverty, insecurity, and bloodshed. It seeks to establish a World Socialist Republic of Workers and Peasants Councils, governed by proletarian democracy. Working class rule of this kind will make possible the construction of socialism, the first stage toward the coming classless society of enduring peace, material abundance, social equality, the brotherhood of man, and boundless progress under a worldwide scientifically planned economy.

3. The Fourth International seeks to incorporate in its program the progressive social experiences of humanity, maintaining the continuity of the ideological heritage of the revolutionary Marxist movement. It offers to the vanguard of the international working class the indispensable lessons to be drawn from the October Revolution in Russia, the subsequent struggle against Stalinist degeneration, and the new revolutionary developments following World War II. The Fourth International stands on the programmatic documents of the first four congresses of the Third International; the International Left Opposition; the Movement for the Fourth

International; the Transitional Program adopted at its Founding Conference in 1938 — *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International*; and the key documents of the world Trotskyist movement since then.

4. The national sections constitute the basic organizational units of the Fourth International. The aim of every national section is to become a mass revolutionary Marxist party capable of guiding the class struggle within the country to a successful conclusion in a socialist victory. To achieve this, the main task of a national leadership that measures up to the historic need [is] to conquer mass influence. This is the means through which the Fourth International aspires to achieve its great emancipating goal, since an international organization does not replace or substitute for a national leadership in heading a revolution. Thus the healthy development of its national sections is of primary concern to the International as a whole.

The basic organizational units of the Fourth International (FI) are national sections. (In some countries such as the United States, reactionary laws prohibit membership in international revolutionary organizations, compelling supporters of the FI to organize themselves only as sympathizing groups of the world body.) Periodically — every three-to-five years — delegates from the various sections meet together in a *World Congress*. These delegates are usually elected, after their national section has a written and oral discussion of issues facing the FI, at a special national conference of their section.

The World Congress discusses, debates, and decides on a number of questions, establishing an orientation and policies which are to guide the international movement until the next World Congress. Because efforts to establish a rigid “international discipline” over various national sections generated a destructive split in 1953 (which was only partially healed in 1963), national sections which disagree with majority decisions are given a considerable amount of leeway. Decisions of the World Congress are implemented flexibly, with comradely collaboration rather than “commandism” being the preferred mode of operation.

An International Executive Committee (IEC) of about 30 people is elected by the World Congress. The IEC meets at least once a year and is the highest decision-making body between World Congresses. The IEC, in turn, elects the United Secretariat (USec), which consists of about 20 people. The USec meets about three times a year, prepares meetings of the IEC, and draws up the FI’s main resolutions and statements. It is seen by many as the International’s central leadership body. The week-by-week functioning of the International Center, however, is overseen by a Bureau, which consists of full-time and part-time staff, elected by the USec. The USec and Bureau attempt to give assistance to national sections, supervise relations with other political currents at an international level, coordi-

nate the work of the International school and other educational efforts, and produce the journals of the International.

Vitally important, however, are the “on-the-ground” activities and experiences of the FI sections and sympathizing groups in various countries around the world. Such activities help to test, refine, and renew the traditional perspectives of the FI, and also to challenge and perhaps pose the need for the revision of some of these perspectives.

The most substantial European sections include those in France, Italy, Belgium, and Sweden, with an important base also in Britain. A sizable Spanish section existed until recently — but it fused with a larger ex-Maoist group, and (although some of its members are clearly loyal to the FI) there is uncertainty over its present status.

In the past decade, sections in Mexico and Brazil have been among the strongest in Latin America, although there are also important groupings elsewhere — forming a Latin American Bureau of the Fourth International. The Mexican section has recently suffered a debilitating split, and there have been sharp debates over how to relate to the electoral process (in particular, to the Revolutionary Democratic Party gathered around the radical-populist Cárdenas). In Brazil, a vibrant and growing section of FI supporters has played a positive role in the trade unions and social movements and constitutes a substantial force in the massive Brazilian Workers’ Party.

There have been some important groupings developing on the African continent recently, and in Asia there have been small but significant organizations in India and Hong Kong, but in Sri Lanka there is a party with a mass base and a strong foothold in the trade union movement.

On the other hand, in the most powerful capitalist countries — the United States, Germany, and Japan — the forces of the Fourth International are presently fragmented and weak. In the ex-Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe (particularly Poland) a small number of thoughtful activists have been drawn to the banner of the FI. There are also individuals and political currents which are not part of the Fourth International but which, nonetheless, tend to relate to the world organization in a positive and comradely manner.

Since capitalism and the class struggle are global, adequate revolutionary socialist analyses and strategic orientations must also be developed internationally. The function of the Fourth International is, in large measure, to facilitate the collaboration of revolutionary Marxists of all countries in developing such analyses and practical orientations.

### **The Trotskyist Heritage and Programmatic Development**

What is alluded to in the above-quoted section of the FI statutes has sometimes been labeled

the “Trotskyist” program, but could also appropriately be termed revolutionary Marxism and authentic Leninism. It is an invaluable resource, the summation of an immense amount of class-struggle experience, of profound study, of a methodological approach and rich body of analyses — a resource that we cannot do without if we wish to move forward as revolutionaries.

But there are three points that must be made: (1) this program is never finished, always in need of revision, renewal, refinement, the integration of new experiences and insights which further enrich and partially transform it (for example, ecology, feminism, gay and lesbian rights, global economic restructuring, profound cultural changes, the collapse of Stalinism — all these necessitate the further development of our program); (2) our traditional labels and terminology can be useful, but they can also be turned into fetishes, becoming obstacles to understanding new realities and communicating with new layers of radicalizing people — so that we can and sometimes should develop new ways of expressing (and sometimes new ways of comprehending) our programmatic fundamentals, without casting these aside or violating their integrity; and (3) many aspects of our program are embraced by militants, activists, theorists, and entire political currents that are not Trotskyist, and these non-Trotskyist forces have proved capable of making valuable contributions to the revolutionary struggle and the revolutionary Marxist program.

The profound changes in the world since the 1930s, since the 1960s, and even since the 1980s have generated a qualitatively new reality in the revolutionary and workers’ movements. A growing number of FI adherents have come to believe that the Fourth International cannot function in ways and with perspectives which may have been appropriate in 1938, 1968, 1978, or even 1988. We have witnessed the final collapse of the world Stalinist movement, the growing disintegration and discrediting of traditional Social Democracy, and the exhaustion of what began as the 1960s global youth radicalization. We have been witnessing an awesome restructuring of the world capitalist economy, a process of global proletarianization, a complex decomposition and recomposition of the working classes and labor movements in our respective countries.

Obviously, such changes must stimulate discussion and debate within our movement. For some in the Fourth International, the way that the FI is described by its own statutes is no longer appropriate to the new realities. Many of the traditional “verities” of the Trotskyist movement are being questioned, and for some comrades the questions appear to be quite profound. Some believe that the concept of a revolutionary vanguard party and the method of democratic centralism must be placed in “the garbage can of history,” that

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# The Transitional Program: “The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International”

(1938) [excerpts]

by Leon Trotsky

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*Editor’s note: The Transitional Program was adopted at the founding congress of the Fourth International in 1938. It remains one of the central texts of the world Trotskyist movement. Its methodology continues to be vitally relevant, although in many ways it is a conjunctural document — dealing with tactics to use during the Great Depression in the advanced capitalist countries, in the anticolonial struggle, in fascist countries, and in the Soviet Union under Stalin’s dictatorship.*

*Most importantly, it sketches a methodological approach toward the development of socialist strategy: within the context of actual struggles by working people, there should be developed “a system of transitional demands, stemming from today’s conditions and today’s consciousness of wide layers of the working class” and yet in fundamental conflict with the power of the capitalists, therefore “unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat.” This approach is alien to the dogmatic-sectarian approach which infects many on the revolutionary left (and which even affects some interpretations of the Transitional Program), instead combining a firm practical adherence to revolutionary goals with a serious involvement in actual mass movements and struggles for reforms, plus an extremely flexible approach to tactics.*

*The following excerpts give a sense of that approach, and of the way that the Fourth International presented itself when it was formally established. It has been widely and frequently published since 1938, although one of the most useful editions is Leon Trotsky, *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, Third Edition (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977), which contains the entire document, plus valuable supplementary materials — including relevant transcripts of discussions between Trotsky and leaders of the SWP and useful essays by George Novack and Joseph Hansen.*

## The Objective Prerequisites for a Socialist Revolution

The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterized by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat. The economic prerequisite for the proletarian revolution has already in general achieved the highest point of fruition that can be reached under capitalism. Mankind’s productive forces stagnate. Already new inventions and improvements fail to raise the level of material wealth. Conjunctural crises under the conditions of the social crisis of the whole capitalist system afflict ever heavier deprivations and sufferings upon the masses. Growing unemployment, in its turn, deepens the financial crisis of the state and undermines the unstable monetary systems. Democratic regimes, as well as fascist, stagger on from one bankruptcy to another.

The bourgeoisie itself sees no way out. In countries where it has already been forced to stake its last upon the card of fascism, it now toboggans with closed eyes toward an economic and military catastrophe. In the historically privileged countries, i.e., in those where the bourgeoisie can still for a certain period permit itself the luxury of democracy at the expense of national accumulations (Great Britain, France, the United States, etc.), all of capital’s traditional parties are in a state of perplexity bordering on a paralysis of will. The “New Deal,” despite its first period pretentious resoluteness, represents but a special form of political perplexity, possible only in a country where the bourgeoisie succeeded in accumulating incalculable wealth. The present crisis, far from having run its full course, has already succeeded in showing that “New Deal” politics, like Popular Front politics in France, opens no new exit from the economic blind alley.<sup>1</sup>

International relations present no better picture. Under the increasing tension of capitalist disintegration, imperialist antagonisms reach an impasse at the height of which separate clashes and bloody local disturbances (Ethiopia, Spain, the Far East, Central Europe) must inevitably coalesce into a conflagration of world dimensions. The bourgeoisie, of course, is aware of the mortal danger to its domination represented by a new war. But that class is now immeasurably less capable of averting war than on the eve of 1914.

All talk to the effect that historical conditions have not yet “ripened” for socialism is the product of ignorance or conscious deception. The objective prerequisites for the proletarian revolution have not only “ripened”; they have begun to get somewhat rotten. Without a socialist revolution, in the next historical period at that, a catastrophe threatens the whole culture of mankind. The turn is now to the proletariat, i.e., chiefly to its revolutionary vanguard. The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership.

## The Proletariat and its Leaderships

The economy, the state, the politics of the bourgeoisie and its international relations are completely blighted by a social crisis, characteristic of a prerevolutionary state of society. The chief obstacle in the path of transforming the prerevolutionary into a revolutionary state is the opportunist character of proletarian leadership: its petty-bourgeois cowardice before the big bourgeoisie and its perfidious connection with it even in its death agony.

In all countries the proletariat is wracked by a deep disquiet. The multimillioned masses again and again enter the road of

revolution. But each time they are blocked by their own conservative bureaucratic machines.

The Spanish proletariat has made a series of heroic attempts since April 1931 to take power in its hands and guide the fate of society. However, its own parties (Social Democrats, Stalinists, Anarchists, POUMists) — each in its own way — acted as a brake and thus prepared Franco's triumphs.<sup>2</sup>

In France, the great wave of sit-down strikes, particularly during June 1936, revealed the wholehearted readiness of the proletariat to overthrow the capitalist system. However, the leading organizations (Socialists, Stalinists, Syndicalists) under the label of the Popular Front succeeded in canalizing and damming, at least temporarily, the revolutionary stream.<sup>3</sup>

The unprecedented wave of sit-down strikes and the amazingly rapid growth of industrial unionism in the United States (the CIO) is the most indisputable expression of the instinctive striving of the American workers to raise themselves to the level of the tasks imposed on them by history. But here, too, the leading political organizations, including the newly created CIO, do everything possible to keep in check and paralyze the revolutionary pressure of the masses.

"People's Fronts" on the one hand — fascism on the other; these are the last political resources of imperialism in the struggle against the proletarian revolution. From the historical point of view, however, both these resources are stopgaps. The decay of capitalism continues under the sign of the Phrygian cap of France as under the sign of the swastika in Germany.<sup>4</sup> Nothing short of the overthrow of the bourgeoisie can open a road out.

The orientation of the masses is determined first by the objective conditions of decaying capitalism, and second, by the treacherous politics of the old workers' organizations. Of these factors, the first of course is the decisive one: the laws of history are stronger than the bureaucratic apparatus. No matter how the methods of the social betrayers differ — from the "social" legislation of Blum to the judicial frame-ups of Stalin — they will never succeed in breaking the revolutionary will of the proletariat. As time goes on, their desperate efforts to hold back the wheel of history will demonstrate more clearly to the masses that the crisis of the proletarian leadership, having become the crisis in mankind's culture, can be resolved only by the Fourth International.

## The Minimum Program and the Transitional Program

The strategic task of the next period — a prerevolutionary period of agitation, propaganda, and organization — consists in overcoming the contradiction between the maturity of the objective revolutionary conditions and the immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard (the confusion and disappointment of the older generation, the inexperience of the younger generation). It is necessary to help the masses in the process of daily struggle to find a bridge

between present demands and the socialist program of the revolution. This bridge should include a system of *transitional demands*, stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat.

Classical Social Democracy, functioning in an epoch of progressive capitalism, divided its program into two parts independent of each other: the *minimum program*, which limited itself to reforms within the framework of bourgeois society, and the *maximum program*, which promised substitution of socialism for capitalism in the indefinite future. Between the minimum and maximum program no bridge existed. And indeed Social Democracy has no need for such a bridge, since the word *socialism* is used only for holiday speechifying.<sup>5</sup> The Comintern has set out to follow the path of Social Democracy in an epoch of decaying capitalism: when, in general, there can be no discussion of systematic social reforms and the raising of the masses' living standards; when the bourgeoisie always takes away with the right hand twice what it grants with the left (taxes, tariffs, inflation, "deflation," high prices, unemployment, police supervision of strikes); when every serious demand of the proletariat and even every serious demand of the petty bourgeoisie inevitably reaches beyond the limits of capitalist property relations and of the bourgeois state.

The strategical task of the Fourth International lies not in reforming capitalism but in its overthrow. Its political aim is the conquest of power by the proletariat for the purpose of expropriating the bourgeoisie. However, the achievement of this strategic task is unthinkable without the most considered attention to all, even small and partial questions of tactics. All sections of the proletariat, all its layers, occupations, and groups should be drawn into the revolutionary movement. The present epoch is distinguished not for the fact that it frees the revolutionary party from day-to-day work but because it permits this work to be carried on indissolubly with the actual tasks of the revolution.

The Fourth International does not discard the program of the old "minimal" demands to the degree to which these have preserved at least part of their vital forcefulness. Indefatigably, it defends the democratic rights and social conquests of the workers. But it carries on this day-to-day work within the framework of the correct actual, that is, revolutionary perspective. Insofar as the old, partial, "minimal" demands of the masses clash with the destructive and degrading tendencies of decadent capitalism — and this occurs at each step — the Fourth International advances a system of *transitional demands*, the essence of which is contained in the fact that ever more openly and decisively they will be directed against the very bases of the bourgeois regime. The old "minimal program" is superseded by the *transitional program*, the task of which lies in systematic mobilization of the masses for the proletarian revolution.

*Editors' note: At this point, there is a discussion of possible transitional demands — a sliding scale of wages to keep pace with inflation, and a sliding scale of hours to eliminate unemployment by reducing the workday to provide jobs for all — which would seem reasonable to most people but which come into conflict with the continued existence of capitalism. This is followed by a discussion of building a class-struggle left wing in the trade unions, and also the development of democratic shop-floor and factory committees. The program calls for the elimination of "business secrets" used to cheat the workers ("open the books!") and calls for the development of structures to establish workers' control of the workplace. The expropriation of capitalist enterprises and industries, and the nationalization of banks and the credit system, under the control of the working-class majority, are also posed.*

*The Transitional Program then discusses the tactical escalation of factory seizures (through sit-down strikes) and picket lines, defense guards to protect picket lines and other workers' actions, the development of workers' militias, and the general arming of the working class — all within the context of mass struggles carried on through the radicalizing organized labor movement, which would be subject*

to attack by repressive governments, by thugs employed by employers, by fascist gangs, etc. A discussion of the need for a workers and farmers alliance, and a discussion of the struggle against imperialism and war, are followed by an examination of the formula of the "workers' and farmers' government," defined as a popularization of the concept of working-class political rule (or "dictatorship of the proletariat"), which should be based on the democratic councils in workplaces and communities that the Russians called soviets.

A substantial section on the struggle against colonialism and imperialism, and the fight for the interests of the workers and peasants, within the economically "backward" countries is followed by substantial sections focusing on struggles in fascist countries and in the USSR. There are critical discussions of left-wing currents that are seen as succumbing to "opportunism and unprincipled revisionism" on the one hand and to "sectarianism" on the other. This is followed by a section entitled: "Open the road to the woman worker! Open the road to the youth!" The Transitional Program then concludes with the following section:

### Under the Banner of the Fourth International!

Skeptics ask: But has the moment for the creation of the Fourth International yet arrived? It is impossible, they say, to create an International "artificially"; it can arise only out of great events, etc., etc. All of these objections merely show that skeptics are no good for the building of a new International. They are good for scarcely anything at all.

The Fourth International has already arisen out of great events: the greatest defeats of the proletariat in history. The cause for these defeats is to be found in the degeneration and perfidy of the old leadership. The class struggle does not tolerate an interruption. The Third International, following the Second, is dead for purposes of revolution. Long live the Fourth International!<sup>6</sup>

But has the time yet arrived to proclaim its creation?...the skeptics are not quieted down. The Fourth International, we answer, has no need of being "proclaimed." It exists and it fights. Is it weak? Yes, its ranks are not numerous because it is still young. They are as yet chiefly cadres. But these cadres are pledges for the future. Outside of these cadres there does not exist a single revolutionary current on this planet really meriting the name. If our International be still weak in numbers, it is strong in doctrine, program, tradition, in the incomparable tempering of its cadres. Who does not perceive this today, let him in the meantime stand aside. Tomorrow it will become more evident.

The Fourth International, already today, is deservedly hated by the Stalinists, Social Democrats, bourgeois liberals, and fascists. There is not and there cannot be a place for it in any of the People's Fronts. It uncompromisingly gives battle to all political groupings tied to the apron-strings of the bourgeoisie. Its task — the abolition of capitalism's domination. Its aim — socialism. Its method — proletarian revolution.

Without inner democracy — no revolutionary education. Without discipline — no revolutionary action. The inner structure of the Fourth International is based on the principles of *democratic centralism*: full freedom in discussion, complete unity in action.

The present crisis in human culture is the crisis in the proletarian leadership. The advanced workers, united in the Fourth International, show their class the way out of the crisis. They offer a program based on international experience in the struggle of the proletariat and of all the oppressed of the world for liberation. They offer a spotless banner.

Workers — men and women — of all countries, place yourselves under the banner of the Fourth International. It is the banner of your approaching victory. □

### Notes

1. The "New Deal" was the plan of the Democratic Party and the U.S. government under President Franklin D. Roosevelt from 1933 until 1939 (when there was a step-up in U.S. preparations for World War II), designed to preserve capitalism by conceding sweeping social reforms during the Great Depression in the face of ferment and radicalization within the working class and other sectors of the population. See Howard Zinn's critical-minded anthology, *New Deal Thought* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1966), and Irving Bernstein's glowing yet

informative *A Caring Society: The New Deal, the Worker, and the Great Depression* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1985); for a Trotskyist critique, see Art Preis, *Labor's Giant Step* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972), pp. 9–18, 44–49, 66–70, 72–81, 113–124.

The "Popular Front" (also known as the People's Front) was a strategy developed in the mid-1930s by the Communist International. At the Comintern's Seventh World Congress (1935), Georgi Dimitroff argued: "Now the toiling masses in a number of capitalist countries are faced with the necessity of making a definite choice, and of making it today, not between proletarian dictatorship and bourgeois democracy, but between bourgeois democracy and fascism." (See Dimitroff, *The United Front, The Struggle Against Fascism and War*, New York: International Publishers, 1938, p. 110.) There was a special concern that the rise of the virulently militaristic, anti-Communist, and anti-Soviet dictatorship of Adolf Hitler in Germany — due in part to Communist sectarianism in refusing to work with other left-wing forces to prevent the Nazi rise to power — posed a direct threat to the so-called "homeland of socialism," the USSR, as well as to the existence of the workers' movement throughout Europe.

Therefore, Dimitroff and others insisted, Communists and Social-Democrats should immediately form a working-class united front, then form a cross-class Popular Front with petty-bourgeois and liberal capitalist forces, for the purpose of creating electoral coalitions to elect Popular Front governments. Such governments should preserve capitalism and bourgeois democracy, but also implement substantial social reforms, and — most important — form a foreign policy alliance with the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany. On the development of this orientation, see E.H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern, 1930-1935* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982).

According to U.S. Communist leader Earl Browder, "Roosevelt's programmatic utterances of 1937, when combined with the legislative program of the C.I.O. (his main labor support), provides a People's Front program of an advanced type." (See Browder, *The People's Front*, New York: International Publishers, 1938, p. 13.)

2. In Spain there were several major currents on the left — the largest component made up of the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI) and anarcho-syndicalist labor federation (the CNT), next being the Socialist Party of Spain and its labor federation (the UGT). The Stalinist-led Communist Party was initially fairly small, and also participated in the UGT. Split-offs from the CP (including what had once been a sizable Trotskyist-influenced current) formed the Unified Marxist Workers Party (POUM).

In 1935 the Socialists and Communists formed an electoral and governmental Popular Front with bourgeois liberal forces, narrowly winning national elections. When a combined conservative-fascist-military uprising in 1936, led by General Francisco Franco, sought to overturn the democratically elected government, a civil war erupted. The Popular Front government of the Spanish Republic followed relatively conservative policies so as not to alienate liberal procapitalist forces inside and outside of Spain. Nonetheless, the more radical anarchists and POUM made far-reaching concessions to the policies and power of the Popular Front government, which in turn (particularly due to Stalinist influence) savagely repressed them. The moderate social policies of the government during the Spanish Civil War, however, undermined the effort to mobilize the Spanish masses against the reactionary generals, landowners, and conservative businessmen who led the right-wing insurgents. Franco's forces finally won in 1939. See Pierre Broué and Emile Temime, *Revolution and the Civil War in Spain* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1970), and Ronald Sanders, *Blood of Spain, An Oral History of the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979). Also see Leon Trotsky, *The Spanish Republic (1931-39)*, edited by Naomi Allen and George Breitman (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973).

3. In France a right-wing coup attempt in 1934 galvanized the working class, which was organized into a Social Democratic formation, the French Section of the Second International (SFIO), the French Communist Party (PCF), and a divided trade union movement — the antipolitical (syndicalist) CGT, led by onetime anarcho-syndicalist Léon Jouhaux, and the pro-Communist CGT-U. A powerful working-class united front, under Socialist-Communist leadership,

*Continued on page 51*

# The International Struggle for Socialism

by James P. Cannon

*In 1943 James P. Cannon gave a speech about the formal termination of the Communist (Third) International. The following edited excerpts present a brief history of attempts to create, build, and sustain an international working-class party.*

Internationalism was not a dogma invented by Marx and Engels but a recognition of the reality of the modern world. It proceeds from the fact that the economy of modern society is a world unit requiring international cooperation and division of labor for the further development of the productive forces. The class struggle arising from the class division between workers and exploiters within the countries requires class unity of the workers on an international scale. From the beginning, the program of scientific socialism has called for the international collaboration of the workers and oppressed peoples in the different countries, with all their different levels of development, in order that each might contribute their strength as well as their weakness to a unified world program and world cooperative action. The "Communist Manifesto" called for common efforts of the workers in all countries for the common goal of workers' emancipation.

After the downfall of feudalism, the national states played a progressive role as the arena for the development and expansion of the forces of production in the heyday of capitalism. But these very national states became obsolete long ago. They have become barriers to the full operation of the productive forces and the source of inevitable wars. The whole pressure of historic necessity is for the breaking down of the artificial national barriers — not for their preservation.

The petty states and principalities and arbitrarily divided sections of the old countries under feudalism had to give way to the consolidated, centralized national states in order to create a broader arena for the development of the productive forces. Today, in the same way, the artificially divided national states have to give way to the federation of states. In the future course of development, this must lead eventually to a world federation operating the world economy as a whole without class and nationalistic divisions. From this it follows irrevocably that such an order can be created only by the international collaboration and the joint struggle of the workers in the various countries against their own bourgeoisie at home and against capitalism as a world system. So preached and so practiced the great founders of socialism, Marx and Engels. So preached and practiced their great continuators, Lenin and Trotsky.

### Revolutionary Internationalism versus Nationalistic Reformism

Among the immortal achievements of Marx as a revolutionist, side by side with his monumental work on "Capital," will always stand his creative labor in the building of the first international organization of the workers, the International Working Men's Association. From the time that the ideas of internationalism were propounded in the "Communist Manifesto" to their first realization in 1864 in the First International, up to the present time, the conflict within the labor movement between revolutionists and reformists has revolved around this fundamental question. At the heart of every dispute, socialist internationalism on the one side has been contrasted to nationalistic concepts on the other.

We can see in the whole period down to the present day the deadly parallel between revolutionary internationalism, pointing the way to the socialist future, and opportunistic adaptation to the decaying order of capitalism. Marx and Engels were the champions of this idea of internationalism and of corresponding action. The nationally limited, narrow-minded trade union reformists of England and other places renounced the idea of internationalism. With the idea of gaining small favors for the day at the expense of the interests of the class as a whole and of the future, conservative trade unionism — even in Marx's day — took a nationalistic form and had a nationalistic outlook.

Since it was first proclaimed nearly a century ago, in the historic ebb and flow, the idea of internationalism and the organization of the international workers have suffered three great defeats. The organizations have been destroyed, but always the idea rose again after each defeat, corresponding to historical necessity, and found the necessary organizational form on higher ground.

### The First International

The First International, that is, the International of Marx and Engels, was founded formally in 1864. Seven years later came the tragic defeat of the Paris Commune. Along with that great defeat and the great impetus it gave to reaction on the continent of Europe, there was the unprecedented rise and expansion of capitalist industry. The productive forces began to expand and develop on a capitalist basis at an unprecedented rate. This temporarily weakened the

revolutionary movement. It was the expansion of capitalism still reaching toward its apex of development which decreed the end of the First International by its formal dissolution in 1876. But the First International was dissolved with its honor unsullied. It remained an inspiration and an ideal which still continued to work in the vanguard circles of the workers and in time bore good fruit.

### The Second International

The Second International followed. It was formally launched in Paris in 1889, thirteen years after the end of the First International, and died as a revolutionary organization on August 4, 1914. The 4th of August was the day when the Social-Democratic deputies in the Reichstag voted for the war credits of German imperialism. But between the manner and form of the end of the Second International and that of the First, there is a great contrast that we should never forget.

The First International succumbed to external conditions — to the defeats, the spread of reaction, and the expanding development of the capitalist productive system. It went down gloriously. The Second International, on the contrary, ended as a result of the betrayal of the leadership in a period when capitalism had already long passed its peak and had entered into its decline and bankruptcy. The Second International capitulated at a time when the necessity and urgency of international revolutionary organization were a thousand times more apparent than in the case of the First International.

### The Third International

The Third International was born of war and revolution and struggle against nationalism in March 1919. This International, too, died ignominiously from a false theory, from capitulation and betrayal.

Already in 1914, the First World War had demonstrated beyond all question that the bourgeois national states, as an arena for the development of the productive forces of humanity, were already outlived and had to give way to a broader basis. National capitalism had already entered into its bankruptcy. The most tragic expression of the bankruptcy of capitalism was the fact that it could find no other way out of the conflicts between outlived national states than in the explosion of

the terrible war that cost ten million lives and crippled and maimed twenty million more.

And it was precisely the demonstration, by the terrible fact of the war, that caused Lenin and Trotsky, and such as they, to realize that even the Second International as it had existed before the war — as a rather loose federation of national parties — could not be rebuilt. As Trotsky expressed it, the war sounded the death knell of national programs for workers' parties. They drew the lesson from the experience of the 1914–18 World War not only that the workers must reconstitute their organization on an international scale, but that they must base this reorganization on an international program and not on the sum of national programs.

Throughout the whole course of Lenin's work — his manifesto after the betrayal of the German Social Democracy, his participation in the conferences at Zimmerwald and Kienthal, in the revolution of 1917, and the formation of the Comintern [Communist International] in 1919 — every act of Lenin from first to last took place under the banner of internationalism. The premises of the Third International were that the dissolution and collapse of the capitalist world order made necessary the organization of the proletariat for the seizure of power in the capitalist states, the federation of the socialist states into a world federation, and the inauguration of the world socialist order.

Lenin saw the Russian Revolution as only the beginning of this worldwide process. Lenin and Trotsky and the Bolshevik party as a whole understood that Russia could not stand isolated in a capitalist world; it could not remain as a national utopia. They saw it as a fortress of the world proletariat. Their policy was to unite the Soviet Union with its allies in the world. And who were the allies of the Soviets as Lenin and Trotsky saw them? Their allies were the world proletariat in the capitalistically developed countries and the colonial peoples. Under this leadership, the workers of the war-torn countries lifted their heads again. They were re-inspired with socialist ideas. They reorganized their ranks. They formed new revolutionary parties. They made heroic attempts at revolution in Europe. The colonial masses were awakened for the first time to political life, to revolt against age-old slavery, and inspired to throw off the imperialist yoke altogether.

Such was the course of development under Lenin's leadership of the Comintern. Under Stalin's leadership, which was tainted from the start with narrow-minded nationalism, the world movement was betrayed; the Soviet Union was isolated; the services of the Comintern and its parties were sold like potatoes on the market to the various camps of imperialists for dubious pacts, for dribbles of material aid, at a very cheap price. Lenin and Stalin — the creator of the Third International and its gravedigger — these two represented ideas and actions which are in polar opposi-

tion to each other. They can in no way be reconciled. I notice that while they had the effrontery to refer to Marx, in the order dissolving the Comintern, they left unmentioned its founder. That at least was a wise omission, because Lenin's name would have been out of place there, as Marx's was also.

In the course of twenty years — from 1924, when the fatal theory of socialism in one country was first promulgated, to the sorry, dishonorable end of the Comintern in 1943; in that whole tragic degeneration — we can see above everything else the decisive role of theory in political action. Stalin didn't begin with the dissolution of the Comintern. He began with the theory of socialism in one country. From this false theory everything else has followed — the betrayal of the world proletariat, the isolation of the USSR behind her national barriers, the purges, the Moscow trials, the mass murders, the assassinations, and, finally, the dissolution of the Comintern.

The struggle against the theory of socialism in one country was conducted in the name of internationalism. Trotsky and his disciples struggled against its disastrous consequences as they began to reveal themselves in life. As the tragic course of events unfolded, Trotsky, step by step, analyzed, he explained, he threw Marxist light on all the great events as they happened, before they happened, and afterwards he drew the necessary conclusions. His work and struggle bore fruit in the creation of an international nucleus of revolutionary fighters, and eventually in the formal organization of the Fourth International, in the World Congress of 1938.

### The Fourth International

At the time it was formed, the great politicians of the mass parties of the Social Democracy used to sneer at Trotsky's little handful and his insignificant Fourth International. The heroes of the London Bureau, the centrists who, if they could not organize mass parties could, at least, talk about them, used to argue against Trotsky that he didn't have many followers. And the Stalinists, backed by the limitless material resources of the Soviet Union, with money, tremendous apparatus, a subsidized bureaucracy, and GPU murder machine at their disposal — with all this tremendous weight at their side, they hounded, persecuted, and derided Trotsky and the Fourth International.

But in the brief period since the Founding Congress of the Fourth International, in a brief five years, every other international organization of the workers has been hurled down to ruin, as Trotsky predicted they would be, without one stone left standing on another. This was the fate of the Second International of Social Democracy, of the London Bureau of the centrists, and now it is the fate of the Stalinists, admitted and acknowledged by themselves. They have all been destroyed by the war [World War II], as Trotsky said they would be. But the Fourth International remains. And with it lives the principle of inter-

nationalism which alone can show the tortured masses of the world the way out of war and slavery to the socialist future of humanity.

### The Legacy of the First Three Internationals

In this past period since 1864, each international organization of the workers — in passing from the historical scene — left something accomplished, left something behind upon which its successor could build for the future.

The First International left an imperishable ideal, an unsullied record, as an inspiration for workers from that day to this, a glorious memory.

The Second International died ignominiously through betrayal in 1914. Nevertheless, in the period from 1889 to that fatal day in August, 25 years later, it built great mass organizations of the workers, and handed on experience in organization of incalculable value, upon which the Third International was able to build. Also, the initial cadres of the Third International didn't fall from the sky. They came right out of the heart of the Second International. Thus, in spite of everything, the Second International left a great heritage.

The Third International, which has ended now in shame and disgrace, has nevertheless left behind the richest treasures for the future. Its founders, Lenin and Trotsky, belong to us; nobody can dissolve the tie that binds the new generation of revolutionary workers to Lenin and Trotsky, to their teachings, their example. The first four Congresses of the Comintern, held under Lenin's leadership in 1919, 1920, 1921, 1922 — four congresses in four years — produced documents which are the basic program of the movement that we uphold today.

And, in addition to that, out of the Third International, before it died and long before it was buried, came the initiating cadres of the Fourth International. Thus, looking at the thing always from the standpoint of the international proletariat and disregarding no elements in the whole survey — whether they are positive or negative — we have a right to say that the balance sheet of the Communist International, in spite of everything, shows a great historical credit balance.

Stalin can bury the dead organization, but he cannot bury the great progressive work the Comintern accomplished in its first years. He cannot bury the Fourth International, which has risen, phoenix-like, from the ashes of the Third. We know very well and we don't try to conceal the fact that the numbers of the Fourth International are small. But its ideas are correct, its program represents historical necessity, and, therefore, its victory is assured. Its program consciously formulates the instinctive demands of the workers and the colonial peoples from emancipation from capitalism, fascism, and war.

## The Situation in 1943 — and Beyond

Even today, striking workers, who never heard of the Fourth International, are denounced as “Trotskyists” whenever they stand up for their rights — just as the workers and soldiers in 1917 under Kerensky were denounced on every side as “Bolsheviks” and heard then, for the first time in the denunciations, the word “Bolshevik.” Trotsky relates in his *History of the Russian Revolution* how they began to say to themselves, “If what they are accusing us of is Bolshevism, then we had better be Bolsheviks.”

So it will be again wherever workers stand up for their rights, express their instinctive will to struggle for a better future, and are denounced as Trotskyists. In good time they will learn the name of the Fourth International, its meaning, its program, and ally themselves with it.

No one can dissolve the Fourth International. It is the real Comintern, and it will keep the banner unfurled in the face of all traitors and renegades. And we assert confidently that it will be strengthened and grow and triumph until its organized ranks merge with the whole mass of humanity. The song which no Stalin can render obsolete ends its chorus with the words: “The International shall be the human race.” And this chorus has a profound political meaning. It is not merely a poetical expression.

The peoples of the world in the various countries, through coordinated international effort, will pass over, in their great historic march from capitalism to socialism through the transitional period of the dictatorship of the proletariat. As they progress toward the complete classless socialist society, all the various workers’ organizations which have been the instruments and mechanisms of the class struggle, that is, the parties, the unions,

the cooperatives, the soviets, will gradually lose their original functions. As the classes are abolished and the class struggles consequently ended, all these instruments of class struggle will tend to coalesce into one united body. And that one united body will be the organized world society of the free and equal. The International shall really be the human race.

We disciples of Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky, we partisans of the Fourth International, retained undimmed that vision of the future. To see that vision even now, to see it clearly through the fire and the smoke of the war, is simply to be in accord with historical development, to foresee the inevitable march of events and to prepare for them. To fight for this vision of the socialist future, to hasten its realization, is the highest privilege and the greatest happiness for a civilized man or woman in the world today. □

## François Moreau

### Statement by *Gauche Socialiste*

Our comrade, our friend, and the editor-in-chief of *La Gauche*, François Moreau, died on September 3 after a brief struggle against Kaposi’s sarcoma, one of the worst illnesses associated with AIDS. His departure leaves an emptiness, a sense of loss, that no individual will be able to fill.

Only 37 years old, François was a militant in the Trotskyist movement, in the Fourth International, since 1975. Beginning in 1977, he never ceased playing a key role in the editing and production of our various publications: *Lutte Ouvrière*, *Combat Socialiste*, *Gauche Socialiste*, and *La Gauche*. Since 1979, he was always in the central leadership of the section of the Fourth International in the Canadian state and participated in the leadership bodies of the International. He was a member of the International Executive Committee and of the economic and ecological commissions.

An economist by training, professor and director of first-year studies in the Department of Sociology at the University of Ottawa, François was one of those rare human beings: an intellectual completely devoted to the building of a revolutionary Marxist working-class organization. Aside from his directly political writings, François was the author of three books on the Québécois economy and numerous contributions to journals and collective works. At the time of his death, he was working on his most ambitious project: a concrete and quantitative analysis of unequal exchange in the epoch of

imperialist decline. Even at the level of his most theoretical writings, François never had the traits of an ivory tower academic, supposedly above it all. His goal was always to “remove the flowers that cover the chains of humanity, not so that humanity won’t have flowers, but so that it be aware that it is chained” (Marx).

Those who read François in the pages of *La Gauche* and elsewhere know the invaluable role that he played in the elaboration of our line and our political interventions. Those who worked with him in Montréal (in the student, international solidarity, and trade union movements) or, more recently, in Hull (in the popular, ecological, and native solidarity movements) know the extent to which he was tireless in concrete struggles. But he drew the greatest pleasure from his untiring work in the political and economic education of his comrades. François always had all the time in the world to discuss with his trade union comrades the concrete analyses of their fractions, the positions of the employers, or the policies of the trade union leaderships.

With the youth comrades, François not only gave classes on the history and traditions of the revolutionary workers movement, but participated in the elaboration of a global analysis of the exclusion of youth from the labor market and education system. Quantifying the need for daycare, critiquing the positions of the government, employers, and trade unions on pay equity, doing all that was possible so that women could play the role in

the revolutionary Marxist organization that is rightfully theirs, all this formed part of the daily struggles of François.

François Moreau was a very reserved comrade on the personal level. He rarely spoke of his own feelings, either his joys or his personal problems. And sometimes, during the debates and discussions that are inevitable in any living movement, he could be quite hard. Still, he was not only respected but loved by those men and women with whom he worked in the social movements, by his university colleagues, and by his comrades in *Gauche socialiste/Socialist Challenge* and the Fourth International.

This past summer, François did not want us to speak of his illness, not because he feared it — far from that — but because he feared it might demoralize his comrades. He was very aware of the fact that the working class and popular movement as a whole is passing through a difficult period of defensive struggles and even defeats. Holding high the flame of revolutionary struggle against this horrible society and for a socialist future can be at times a painful task in this current period.

But François was wrong in fearing for his comrades. He not only left us all the richness of his writings (which we plan to re-edit in the pages of *La Gauche* and elsewhere), but above all he left us the example of his life, a million times more successfully than those who gloomily slacken to a life of individualist careerism.

François struggled to the end, and his example reinforces us in our intention of struggling until all of humanity liberates itself from the yoke of exploitation and oppression.

We take up the expression of our revolutionary Latin American comrades and shout out with raised fists: ¡François Moreau Presente! ¡Ahora y siempre! □

# A Needed Restatement of Marxist Principles

*Socialism or Barbarism on the Eve of the 21st Century (Programmatic Manifesto of the Fourth International)*

Published by U.S. supporters of the Fourth International. (To order, see advertisement on the back cover of this magazine.)

Reviewed by Bill Onasch

Over the past few years we have been bombarded with news stories, features, and editorials about the death of socialism. The Cold War was declared over with the supreme victory of Western-style capitalism secured. We were entering a New World Order.

To be sure, while this obituary remains somewhat premature, the pundits and poets who celebrate this best of all possible worlds have had much to gloat about.

The two main examples of what they identify as socialism — bureaucratized Stalinist states, and social democratic “welfare states” — have indeed collapsed, or are in the process of transformation.

The impact of this has not been limited to Europe, where the most spectacular reverses have occurred — the global ramifications are immense. The so-called “Third World” no longer has any chance of maneuvering between the “superpowers.” Russia’s active backing, and China’s shame-faced support, for the Gulf War signaled a new stage, removing a principal deterrent to U.S. military intervention around the world. The curtailment of Soviet/COMECON aid and trade has brought Cuba to the brink of disintegration.

There have also been dramatic changes in the imperialist countries themselves. Here the process has been somewhat transposed — peaceful coexistence between the bosses and the labor bureaucracy has been replaced by a Cold War, sometimes heating up. Major strikes have been broken. Restructuring of industry has destroyed old bastions of militant unionism. Real wages have been falling and the percentage of unionization of the workforce — especially in the private sector — has plummeted.

This new global relationship of forces between capital and labor, perhaps the bleakest for the workers during this century, has had a profound impact on workers’ organizations and their intellectual periphery. The social democrats have tried to improvise a kind of Thatcherism with a human face to maintain their credibility as worthy governors. Reeling from the loss of their connections to state power, the Communist parties of the world are being refurbished, often with new names and slogans. Their cynical bureaucratic leaderships are mainly jettisoning their old ideology while trying to get on the new capitalist bandwagon — sometimes successfully. The working class followers of these parties, who

tended to take their anticapitalist, prosocialist slogans more seriously, have become largely demoralized and marginalized.

Many academics — including former “leftists” — have also been busy responding to the new world reality. Some have spoken, in the tradition of Hegel, of the “end of history.” Post-modernists earnestly attack “grand narratives” — especially Marxism — embracing a new agnosticism that relieves one of any responsibility for trying to work out an analysis of global events, much less a program for affecting them.

On the other hand, there are tiny groups of self-described Marxists who maintain there is nothing new to get excited about and carry on business as usual. Some shout “Mao more than ever!” and find all the needed answers in the *Little Red Book*, while others evoke an iconic Trotsky, reverently positioning the *Transitional Program* on their literature tables as if it were the Ark of the Covenant.

Of the major currents in the world workers’ movement the Fourth International has stood pretty much alone in rejecting both despair and nonchalance while approaching the new challenges facing the struggle for socialism. For the past several years the FI has carried on a far-ranging, sometimes self-critical, discussion of its basic assumptions and goals and of its organizational successes and failures. One product of this discussion is the publication of *Socialism or Barbarism*.

*Socialism or Barbarism* is the third such comprehensive programmatic manifesto to be adopted by the FI. The first was its founding document, *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International* (commonly referred to as the *Transitional Program*) in 1938.<sup>1</sup> Drafted by Trotsky, it remains a valuable asset. The second, *Dynamics of World Revolution Today*<sup>2</sup> was adopted in 1963. It too remains useful.

Both of these earlier documents were adopted in periods when revolution seemed to be on the agenda throughout much of the world. Today that is not the case and it would be foolish for us to ignore or underestimate this.

*Socialism or Barbarism* attempts to make a sober assessment of this very different period. It does so without succumbing to defeatism. While acknowledging the setbacks the socialist movement has been dealt recently it also examines the present reality and likely direction of the capitalist New World Order.

The first of 22 sections of the manifesto, entitled “The Widening Dangers,” reviews the stakes of the class struggle today:

- although there have been some disarmament agreements among former “superpowers,” the arms race nevertheless remains;

- “local wars,” of which there have been more than 100, with 20 million casualties since 1945, continue, with no end in sight;
- environmental destruction poses a threat to humanity’s physical survival;
- famine has assumed genocidal proportions in some areas, caused not by inadequate productivity, as during previous historical periods, but as the result of high productivity leading to falling profitability in the richest countries;
- the global restructuring process of capitalism has resulted in the creation of at least one billion poor people;
- this restructuring no longer affects only the Third World — there are 40 million unemployed in the industrialized countries, four times as many as at the beginning of the 1970s, and the mushrooming of part-time and casual labor has created millions of “new poor” in the richest countries;
- economic restructuring has been accompanied by the growth of state repression, restrictions on democratic rights, a resurgence of racism and xenophobia, attacks on women’s rights, gay-bashing, and, in some countries, even significant fascist movements.

The second section is entitled “No Soft Landing Out of the Depression.” Some may object to the designation of “depression” as being an exaggeration. *Socialism or Barbarism* doesn’t present any arguments to support this assertion. But it should be noted that there is even a layer of bourgeois economists who argue that the United States, and possibly Japan and Germany, are in the beginnings of a depression. Not a recession, a normal temporary downturn in production that occurs every few years, but a long-term severe economic decline that may last a decade or more. For example, A. Gary Shilling, who heads a prominent economics consulting firm, and is a frequent contributor to publications such as the *Wall Street Journal*, and *Forbes*, believes we are entering a “Kondratieff Wave Depression.”<sup>3</sup>

U.S. proponents of the depression designation point to a number of similarities between the period of the late 1920s — the beginning of the last acknowledged depression — and today.

First of all is enormous debt, both public and private. Total debt is at its highest level since the 1930s depression. Some economists argue that there is a debt cycle that occurs every 50–70 years. According to them, borrowing during prosperous times gradually builds up a debt accumulation to the point where it has to be liquidated. Many think we’ve already reached that point.

U.S. debt more than tripled during the Reagan-Bush years. Interest payments alone on

the federal government debt are the third largest item in the budget. The current total U.S. debt, public and private, is 14 trillion dollars — give or take a few hundred billion. The entire gross national product in 1990 was only 5 trillion. That means it would take nearly three years worth of all economic activity in this country to retire the debt. Put another way: if you divided this debt up equally among every child, woman, and man in the country it would average out to more than \$56,000 per head, or about a quarter of a million dollars for a typical size family.

If the debt-cycle theorists are correct in asserting we are in a long-term debt retirement cycle, this means a prolonged contraction of economic activity.

Complementing this debt-payback cycle is a trend toward deflation. Ten years ago everyone was preoccupied with runaway inflation. Inflation has been brought under control in the industrialized countries, but now the worry is the opposite side of the coin — long-term declines in prices, wages, and virtually all assets. We have already witnessed a more-or-less steady decline in real wages over the past decade. Real-estate prices are in a prolonged slump. So the danger of deflation cannot be easily dismissed.

The last depression took vengeance on the practice of buying stock “on the margin” — that is with borrowed money, using the purchased stock as collateral. In recent years, a similar practice became widespread — the leveraged buy-out. LBO takeovers of companies were financed through debt — often through so-called “junk bonds.” When the buyers failed to loot enough of the purchased company’s assets to service their debt — which happened frequently — a lot of people got hurt.

Massive debt and margin buying led to the collapse of many banks during the last depression. We have already seen the collapse of much of the savings and loan industry, and increasing numbers of traditional banks are going under as well.

We have not yet seen a catastrophic drop in industrial production of the kind that marked the last depression. However, many economists find it disturbing that increases in industrial production, such as have taken place in recent months, have not led to corresponding increases in employment. In fact some areas of the economy continue to lay off, or “downsize” through other methods, even as they increase production of goods, or especially services. (A similar downsizing trend was evident in the 1920s, prior to the collapse.)

The last depression was accompanied by a trade war between the major industrial powers which, in the end, exacerbated problems in all these countries. At first glance it would seem that the capitalists have learned something from that experience. The European Economic Community (EEC), the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA),

and the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) are efforts to avoid self-destructive cutthroat trade practices.

But many tensions endure. Despite the growth of multinational corporations that do have truly global perspectives, there remain many and deep national divisions among the capitalists. These differing interests are advanced by the various national states. American capitalists are pushing hard against European agricultural subsidies while the French show little inclination of backing down on this issue. The U.S. auto and steel companies are calling for substantial new tariffs against Japanese and European imports. U.S. air carriers have bitterly resisted British and Dutch inroads into the airline industry. Attempts to forge a single European currency have collapsed as each central bank tries to defend its own. As this is being written the future of both NAFTA and GATT appears uncertain. So there is still the potential for major trade wars.

The case for the depression designation seems persuasive to me. It certainly can’t be dismissed out of hand as Marxist hyperbole. To those who promote a sort of “managed care” approach to nursing the system through its present troubles *Socialism or Barbarism* warns:

Those who foresee a gradual way out of the depression through more patience and more sacrifices by the exploited do not understand the intimate link between the catastrophes threatening us and the intrinsic logic of a generalized market economy, the very essence of capitalism: exacerbated competition with no regard for its overall effects on society; the never ending pursuit of short-term profits and the drive to accumulate private wealth, without taking into account the human costs and the irreparable damage inflicted upon nature; the extension of competitive and aggressive behavior in relationships between individuals, social groups, and states; generalized egoism, greed and corruption, the law of the jungle and the “weakest to the wall!”

While recognizing that there will likely be occasional phases of economic upturn, even within the period of depression, the manifesto argues:

But such upturns mean an ever growing transfer of the cost of the depression onto the “Third World” and the most destitute in the imperialist countries.

A section, “Catastrophe Is Already on the March in the ‘Third World,’” begins with the statement: “In the dependent countries, where the vast majority of the world’s population lives, barbarism is already at work.” It backs up this assertion with some grim facts:

- workers’ purchasing power in these countries has been cut in half;
- the calorie consumption of half the population is on a level of that in Nazi concentration camps;
- 15 million children die every year simply from lack of food or common medicines — approximately the same rate of deaths

suffered in combatant countries during the Second World War.

*Socialism or Barbarism* also examines the crisis of the former Stalinist states. The Fourth International has always opposed using the designation of socialism to describe these countries. It also rejected various theories, such as bureaucratic collectivism, state capitalism, managerial revolution, etc., that projected Stalinism as a new stable type of class society. The FI held instead that Stalinism was a temporary, transitional phenomenon, arising where capitalism had been overthrown but where the material and subjective conditions were still inadequate for developing genuine socialism. In the long run Stalinism would either give way to the advance of socialism, through a political revolution by the workers, or else would fall to capitalist counterrevolution.

To be sure this “temporary” phase lasted for seven decades in the ex-USSR, but the contradictions noted by the FI have finally caught up with Stalin’s heirs.

*Socialism or Barbarism* argues that the crisis in the ex-USSR and Eastern Europe is fundamentally different from the crisis of overproduction in the industrialized capitalist countries, or the distortion and constriction of development in the Third World. The main objective of the Stalinist bureaucracy historically was to maintain the status quo, to try to stabilize their parasitic privileges. But compulsive stability led to stagnation and atrophy.

This crisis has been maturing for years. Mikhail Gorbachev’s policy did not provoke it, but simply brought it out into the open. In the USSR and Eastern Europe, it was manifest particularly in a slowdown of economic growth; in increasingly pronounced technological backwardness compared with the imperialist countries; in social stagnation and regression; in the appearance of new, widespread poverty; in deep moral and ecological crises; and in the brutal loss of credibility of political institutions. Added to this were the absence of a motivation to work, a pronounced decline in social engagement — a turning back toward private life and conformism in important sections of the masses — which undeniably prolonged the life of the bureaucratic dictatorship.

In the early eighties the monolithic Soviet bureaucracy began to divide into hostile factions over how to deal with their crisis. Some wanted to return to the harsh rule of the Stalin era but this was rejected by most as impractical and ineffective. The Gorbachev wing sought to reform the system, trying to win public support for glasnost and perestroika as a means of invigorating the USSR through “market socialism.” *Socialism or Barbarism* has this to say about market socialism.

But the idea of “market socialism” is a contradiction in terms. In a truly socialist society freely associated producers will themselves determine what they produce, how they produce it, and how they distribute it — at least in their main outlines. Demo-



cratic management of the economy, conscious and collective determination of what priorities to satisfy and the means to get there, is incompatible with the blind rule of the market and competition...

Gorbachev tried to graft policies of Reagan and Thatcher onto the bureaucratized remains of the Russian revolution. The resulting hybrid was all thorns and no flowers. Glasnost heightened expectations while perestroika failed to deliver the goods.

The failure of Gorbachev's reforms set the stage for another wing of the bureaucracy, personified by Yeltsin, to take command. They dropped any pretense of continuity with socialism, openly embracing a restoration of capitalism. They hoped, if not to establish themselves as a new capitalist class, at least to become the brokers to sell off the collectivized economy to a new, probably foreign-dominated, capitalist class.

The restoration of capitalism has not gone smoothly and is far from complete. The old planned economy has been wrecked without a viable capitalist market to replace it. Some features of Western capitalism have been quicker to appear than others — unemployment, homelessness, drug addiction, widespread crime, both of the small-time street variety and high-level gangsterism, to name a few. On the other hand, the promised abundance of consumer goods for the masses seems remote.

Even more ominous is the fracturing bureaucracy's whipping up of ethnic conflicts as they seek to consolidate new fiefdoms. There has been a resurgence of anti-Semitism. In many parts of the former Soviet Union glasnost is more form than content. The old Communist Party leaders maintain more or less the same dictatorship with new democratic trappings.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union is seen as the crowning achievement of the New World Order. But for the peoples of the former USSR the likely result will be a decline in living standards proportionally greater than those occurring in either the imperialist countries or the Third World.

*Socialism or Barbarism* demonstrates how vacuous are the claims of victory by the capitalists. It also restates the socialist goal that revolutionary Marxists seek:

The overall goal which we pursue is the increased emancipation of all human beings from every form of exploitation, oppression, alienation, and violence which today bear down on us. Socialism will be self-administrative, democratic, pluralist, multi-party, feminist, ecologist, antimilitarist, internationalist, and it will abolish wage labor — or it will never exist.

Answering critics who claim such notions are utopian:

Even conservative sources estimate that at least 50 percent of the total productive potential is unused or used for destructive and harmful ends (arms), or simply wasted. With

the rational and productive use of already existing resources, respecting ecological needs, it would be possible to simultaneously reduce the hours of work, move towards the abolition of misery and underdevelopment in the "Third World," while also improving the quality of life and eliminating poverty in all countries.

Can ordinary people really run society?

The real potential inherent in human intelligence and generosity can blossom only under a genuinely socialist and democratic regime — where science and technology are at the service of human needs... All the benefits of culture and higher education will be completely and freely available to everyone for the first time. This will result in an explosion of cultural creativity, the liberation of still unexplored intellectual energy... The realization of a new citizenship, for the first time establishing society's control over a state and administrative apparatus destined to wither away, requires a radical reduction in working hours. A four-hour day would effectively eliminate the need for a professional bureaucracy, allowing workers sufficient time to truly manage society themselves... This pilot measure of the socialist revolution — at least in the industrialized countries — is not a utopia. There is a solid objective basis for it.

This manifesto reaffirms the basic Marxist position that only the working class has both the interest and the power to lead a successful socialist revolution. To those who see the working class in decline it answers:

If traditional concentrations of workers in the automobile, steel, mining and the metal industries have become partially weakened, they have by no means disappeared. If employment has strongly increased in the so-called service sectors, many of these really represent branches of industry — such as telecommunications and transport. New important massive concentrations of wage earners now exist in these areas. The industrialization and mechanization of labor in these jobs makes such workers more militant than in the past. And bank workers, telecommunications workers, workers in the energy sector, can today paralyze the capitalist economy and bourgeois society more effectively than the industrial workers of yesterday. More numerous and capable than ever before, the world proletariat now comprises more than one billion human beings. The dominant tendency everywhere in the world is for wage work to expand, not contract, including in the most developed countries.

While reaffirming the leading role of the working class, *Socialism or Barbarism* also situates the struggles of the proletariat's allies, and other social movements. A few samples:

#### On Women's Oppression

The fight against women's oppression is... a fundamental part of the overall struggle for social liberation. It is not simply a question of democratic demands or civil rights — important as these things are. Ending women's oppression is an essential part of any struggle for a better society. This includes the absolute right to abortion and

contraception on demand and the right to adequate economic and social support in the bearing and rearing of children, full equality at work and in job training, sexual freedom, freedom from sexual and sexist abuse and violence, and an end to domestic servitude... There can be no genuine women's liberation without socialism — that is, without the abolition of both capitalist and patriarchal private property. And there can also be no socialism without women's liberation.

#### On Nationalism

[The] starting point of all real internationalist policies must be a radical distinction between the nationalism of the oppressed, whose struggles we solidarize with unconditionally, and the nationalism of the oppressors, which we oppose irreconcilably. This means the right to self-determination of oppressed nations — that is, their right to independence or to organize themselves in a sovereign way either in union or as part of a confederation with other nations, freely consented to and freely reversible in all cases... The struggle against national oppression is thus inscribed in the perspective of democratic socialism. It means the working class puts itself at the head of the struggle against national oppression, that it does not consider itself external to this cause but behaves as the vanguard of the oppressed nations and "races" while maintaining internationalist solidarity with the struggles of all workers, including those of the oppressor nation.

#### On the Environment

It is clear that the main obstacle to resolving such problems [environmental destruction] is not a lack of scientific knowledge, but the fact that pollution continues to be more profitable than ecologically sound alternatives... An effective struggle against pollution, a systematic defense of the environment, a consistent search for renewable resources, a strict economy in the employment of nonrenewable resources would therefore require that decisions concerning investments and choices about production techniques be taken out of the hands of private corporations and transferred to a social collective which can decide them democratically. It requires also that such private interests have no power to interfere with these choices and priorities. This, then, requires the creation of a society without classes.

Throughout this document there is an emphasis on internationalism.

During the last few decades, there has been an accelerating internationalization of productive forces. Less than seven hundred multinational corporations dominate the world market. They are increasingly escaping the control of any government, including those of the main imperialist powers. They transfer their investments, production and distribution centers from country to country solely in order to maximize profits. This internationalization of the productive forces of capital, of services, of the division of labor, leads to a growing internationalization of the class struggle... The only adequate response to the global strategy of the multinationals is international solidarity by the workers of every country — against their own national bosses as well as foreign ones... [In] our

increasingly interdependent world internationalism is not a simple moral imperative; it is an immediate tactical and strategic necessity.

Concrete expressions of internationalism include coordinated trade union activities to try to elevate the wages and working conditions of the poorest workers; campaigns against the imperialist-held debts that are sucking the Third World dry; movements against military intervention. But, as important as such activities may be, more is needed: the workers of the world need a mass, revolutionary international party to advance the struggle for socialism.

The Fourth International, with its few thousand members, does not pretend to be that needed party. Nor does it expect the masses will come to it and transform the present FI into such a party. More likely is a complex process of fusions and splits of existing national groupings and an influx of future fighters not yet on the scene.

Real parties cannot be simply self-proclaimed. But neither do they arise spontaneously or accidentally. While maintaining a sense of modesty and proportion, the Fourth International recognizes the vital role it plays at this challenging juncture as the only significant force on a world scale preparing the building of an international party.

The Fourth International today is an irreplaceable instrument, the only one we have for advancing in this direction, even if only in a modest way...as long as we cannot convince our revolutionary comrades or partners of the necessity and the timeliness of working immediately to build a revolutionary international — founded on a program to defend the interests of the exploited and oppressed in every country and collective action along these lines — we claim the right to do this openly ourselves.

I will pass on a few cautions to potential readers. First of all, those familiar with revolutionary Marxist literature will find no great new breakthroughs. *Socialism or Barbarism* primarily restates and defends past positions in light of today's situation. But, considering the disarray of most of the left, this is not unimportant.

Nor will readers find precise marching orders on how to proceed. The methodology and perspective presented can aid us in developing our own concrete analysis, and strategy and tactics, appropriate to our varying national, local, and personal situations, but it cannot and does not attempt to do these things for us.

My most serious negative reaction to this manifesto is to its syntax and style. There are some monster run-on sentences and occasional lapses into arcane and even pedantic phraseology. I understand some of the reasons for this weakness: the discussion of various drafts and amendments to this document took place in several languages over a period of several years. Literary polishing to match

the political precision required is a lot to ask for. Still, one wishes a better job could have been done with the translation and editing of the English edition.

\* \* \*

There are some who will read this review and think "This all sounds pretty good. Capitalism is in trouble. Socialism would be a better alternative. But, unfortunately, there doesn't seem much we can do about it. People have lost faith in socialism and all the movements seem to be in retreat. Maybe someday things will change but this period seems hopeless."

Some of those holding this view will retreat into their private lives. Others will try to do what they can in trade union work, or in the various social movements. These are not bad people and the questions and doubts that they raise cannot be dismissed.

But I believe the perspective of *Socialism or Barbarism* helps us to understand that even the present period — difficult to be sure — is far from hopeless. The collapse of the Stalinist bureaucracy has two sides. Certainly the credibility of socialism has been severely undermined. But the pernicious role that powerful Communist parties played in defusing past revolutionary potential has been eliminated for good. The elimination of that formidable obstacle is a historic achievement for the revolutionary movement.

The unions are taking a beating, it is true. But even in these harshest times strikes, job actions, organizing drives, and struggles against the union bureaucracy continue and they do not all end in defeat. The women's liberation movement has suffered some disorientation and decline, yet significant fights in defense of abortion rights maintain strong support. And let's not forget that at the height of giddiness over the New World Order — the Gulf War — an impressive mass antiwar movement sprang up overnight, ending only because of the rapid termination of the war.

Times are tough but not hopeless. There is no reason to suppose that people will not fight

back against the developing crisis. There certainly will be struggles. The question is what kind of leadership can be given to the inevitable fights ahead? Will revolutionary socialists be prepared to influence them?

We are not faced with the alternatives: either work for socialism or be content with the status quo. Our alternatives are, as the title of the manifesto suggests: either we win the fight for socialism or we lapse into barbarism — or worse.

What can we do today? Of course we need to be active in unions and social movements, presenting ideas, and working to build them. But we also need to educate ourselves, develop an analysis of what's happening in the world, carry out basic socialist propaganda, and organize those who are prepared to act. This is the most fundamental type of preparation, unglamorous and unlikely to produce short-term dramatic results. But it is an inescapable stage of building a real revolutionary force. To postpone these tasks until better times is to invite disaster. Time is not on our side.

For those who want to understand the world *Socialism or Barbarism* will make interesting reading; for those who want to change the world it is indispensable reading. □

August 23, 1993

## Notes

1. Available in the collection *Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, Pathfinder Press, New York.
2. Published as part of a collection, *Dynamics of World Revolution Today*, Pathfinder Press, 1974.
3. The Russian economist Nikolai Kondratieff published a book in 1925 called *The Long Waves in Economic Life*, in which he presented an impressive argument that capitalism has a regular 50–60-year cycle from boom to bust back to boom. Stalin didn't much care for Kondratieff's theory and had him sent to a labor camp, where he disappeared. But he still has some followers among bourgeois economists who argue that we are well into a twenty-five year cycle of economic decline.



# Women and Economic Integration

by Heather Dashner, Carol McAllister, and Eva Nikell

*The following is the result of a discussion in the Women's Commission of the Fourth International's International Executive Committee. It should be seen as an initial attempt to develop an analysis. Suggestions, reactions, and further contributions are welcome.*

**R**estructuring and integration of the global capitalist economy — including the recent imposition of so-called structural adjustment policies involving austerity measures, privatization of the economy, and deregulation of the market — and the current moves toward establishing formal trade blocs through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the European Economic Community (EEC), and MERCOSUR (Mercado Común de Sur — Common Market of the South, the trade bloc in the southern cone of South America), have particular impacts on women in both dependent and imperialist countries. Equally important, these economic transformations and their role in undermining the political strength of the international working class depend precisely on the continuing oppression and exploitation of women. This latter point must be grasped to adequately understand the fundamental dynamics involved.

Broadly speaking, the formal trade blocs, with their goals of downward “harmonization” of economic and social policies to remove barriers to the free movement of capital, the search for cheap labor, and the maximization of profits, simply codify and deepen trends already well under way.

While there are regional variations, we can point to some general implications for women and some gendered aspects of integration. We have grouped them in the areas

of work, health and welfare, social gains, sexuality, and ideology.

### Women's Work

The overall implications of economic integration for women's work have been to promote contradictory proletarianization of women on a world scale, forcing them into the workforce and at the same time using their role in the family and society to justify job insecurity and casualization and the return of many public services to the “private” sphere of the family, to be shouldered by women.

Today's international capitalist restructuring involves the development of export-processing industrialization by multinational corporations whereby parts of the production process (usually those that are low-skilled and labor intensive) are located in “free trade” zones throughout the Third World. These zones represent localized models of what the new trading blocs will create on a broader regional basis. Industries in these “free trade” zones depend on the particular exploitation of women's labor to provide the increase in surplus value and in profits that is the goal of global restructuring. As a result, a significant layer of Third World women are brought into industrial production and in fact into some of the most modern sectors of the economy, though under very exploitative conditions.

However, this development has also been accompanied by a huge expansion of the informal sector, into which most women, including those who have been laid off by multinational industries because of age or pregnancy, are channeled. In fact, women's work in the informal economy is used to underwrite the “cheapness” and “flexibility” of both male and female labor in the industrial sector and to provide a safety valve for periodic retrenchments in that sector. This trend of informal sector work is accelerated by the increasing commercialization and export orientation of local agriculture, a shift which frequently undermines women's role in the more traditional farming economy.

In the imperialist centers, there has been a shift of the job market away from industrial work toward service sector employment, drawing large numbers of women into the low-paid “pink collar” ghetto. This shift was accomplished without massive social disruption by building off of the gendered division

of labor in the family. Thus it was women who played the key role in holding families together through periods of unemployment and economic stress and also women who more readily took up the new low-wage jobs in response to their feeling of responsibility for family survival. This expansion of the service sector has been combined with a new phase of industrial development in the U.S., Canada, and Western Europe, depending largely on the labor of immigrant women. These women, vulnerable because of the combined factors of gender, race, and immigrant status, often work in small workshops or at home, signalling the revival of turn-of-the-century sweatshops and the putting-out system. Such fragmentation and casualization of women's industrial work, which is paralleled by the trend toward temporary and part-time employment in the service sector, is a *central component* of the ruling class strategy of creating a “contingent” or “flexible” workforce.

Structural adjustment policies, and the resulting rise in unemployment, have served to disproportionately drive women out of the formal economy while also increasing their need to find some kind of income-producing work. They thus turn to the informal sector, where women are increasingly forced to take jobs such as day laborers, street vendors, or prostitutes. In some Third World countries, unemployment has reached such proportions that men and women are now competing over informal sector jobs, thus removing even this safety net for women.

The establishment of formal trade agreements will most certainly accelerate these developments, leading to a further “maquiladorization” of women's work in both advanced capitalist and Third World societies. One of their basic aims — aside from ensuring certain rules for capital flow and investment, while highly regulating other things like patents — will be to generalize the elimination of certain regulations governing working conditions and labor relations, using the argument that their maintenance would constitute “unfair trade practices.” Undoubtedly, then, we would see challenges to rights like:

- the right to safe, decent working conditions. Hazardous conditions in both industry and services where women are concentrated al-



ready exist — for example, danger from the use of toxic chemicals in electronics factories, fires in garment sweatshops, and the rise in stress-related injury for clerical workers using computers.

- retirement age requirements may be “harmonized,” as is already being foreseen in Uruguay, where the MERCOSUR could raise women’s retirement age by 7 to 9 years to jibe with Brazil’s higher age.
- maternity leave with pay, as well as child care, Both legal rights in Mexico, could be eliminated formally by NAFTA.
- affirmative action programs, a hard-won right both for people of color and women in the U.S. and Canada, could be challenged as an undue burden on capitalists in both countries, “prejudicing” their competitiveness.

In the agricultural sector, NAFTA and the EEC will promote the domination of agribusiness, leading to peasant women’s further loss of this economic base.

### Health and Welfare

These changes in conditions and security of work directly affect women’s health and general well-being as well as the welfare of those family members (especially children and the elderly) for whom women are primarily responsible. Rising prices and unemployment put stress on women’s own ability to provide for basic needs, while cutbacks in public spending and the dismantling of social welfare programs decrease state support for such services as education, health care, and child care. This development is particularly deleterious for women because of their perceived role in both biological and social reproduction. At the same time, the state depends on women to “take up the slack” and provide on a private basis services that were previously provided by the government, thus furthering the process of structural adjustment.

NAFTA in particular threatens to unleash health hazards for women as it opens the way to challenging existing environmental laws as “unfair trade practices.” For example, in certain communities on the U.S.-Mexican bor-

der, the problem of toxic wastes is already linked to cancers of the female reproductive system and to severe birth defects, such as anencephalic children. With the general weakening of environmental regulations, such problems could become more widespread throughout North America. At the same time, NAFTA will pose a challenge to the national health care programs of Canada and Mexico, while making it more difficult to establish a comparable program in the U.S. While this affects the whole of the working class, women, both as primary consumers of health care services and as those mainly responsible for family health, will be particularly hard hit. In the case of the EEC as well, health care and other components of the state welfare system could be gradually chipped away.

### Social Gains and Basic Rights.

Closely related to the question of health and welfare is the effect of economic restructuring and the new trade policies on the social gains women have fought for over the past quarter century and in relation to which they have won at least partial victories. These include the right to reproductive freedom (including the right to abortion), the right to equal pay, and the right to freedom from sexual harassment and violence.

While the general economic crisis has already generated serious attacks on women’s rights, formal trade agreements have the potential to undermine these rights in a more formal and thoroughgoing way. This is largely a result of the supranational and corporate-dominated decision-making structures proposed in these agreements that will supersede regular legislative and executive actions. This, combined with the focus on “unfair trade practices,” sets up a situation rife for the challenging of measures that help equalize women’s role in the economy. While the reason for attacking these rights may have a primarily economic basis, we should note that the rights themselves help ensure women’s position in many areas of society. Their significant weakening would, in fact, bring into question women’s basic status as citizens. The possibility for such a development is particularly clear in North America, where NAFTA provides no guarantees for such rights. In Europe, the situation is more uneven in that the Social Charter that accompanies the EEC proposal provides common European principles on these matters, thus promoting stronger measures in certain cases (e.g., Ireland and Portugal) while watering down existing laws in others (e.g., Sweden).

### Sexuality

The manipulation of women’s sexuality is one of the primary means by which capitalist restructuring uses and builds on women’s oppression. This happens in several ways. First, there are the attacks on sexual and reproduction rights discussed above. In this sense, such attacks can be seen as not only an effect of economic change but also as preparing the way for further restruc-



turing by making women more vulnerable in both economic and social terms. Second, we can find numerous instances where the entry and dismissal of women from the wage-labor force, as well as the conditions of superexploitation under which most women work, are justified by images of female sexuality. This, for example, is very common in factories, where women are alternately represented as “sexually loose” and thus “free” to be exploited, or as requiring stringent controls — including the physical organization of the workplace using the threat of sexual violence — to maintain their sexual purity, thus limiting their autonomy and mobility. Finally, there are particular instances — such as the expansion of the international sex trade in Europe, Asia, and Latin America, the increase in dowry deaths in India, and the imposition of class-based population policies, for example, in Singapore — in which women’s sexuality is both commodified and controlled in ways that directly further the economic strategies of individual men or the capitalist class as a whole.

### Ideology

The ideological transformations that accompany global integration also impact women. This too has several aspects. There is, for example, the manipulation of sexual images and norms we have just discussed. Also of importance is the ideological emphasis on individualism and privatization that parallels recent changes in economic relations. Because of women’s traditional role in the family, such an ideological development differentially affects them — and also depends on their often unconscious collaboration to carry out such broad cultural change. Finally, there is the possibility that NAFTA and the EEC will play a role in undermining both memories of and aspirations for progressive national struggles. This in turn could have special implications for women, since it is through such struggles that women’s demands are frequently raised and secured. For example, to prepare the way for implementation of NAFTA, there are already pressures to revise the official histories of the Mexican revolution. Such revisions would serve to weaken the collective memory of the gains of that revolution, including those of particular importance to women, such as rights to maternity leave, child care, and health care. The Irish struggle provides another example, in that the dampening of its vigor, because of the renewed ideology of a common Europe, could also dampen aspirations for women’s emancipation connected with the goal of national liberation. □



# International Viewpoint

One of the distinguishing characteristics of revolutionary socialists is our global outlook. We are not only revolutionary activists where we live and work but recognize the need to be part of a worldwide struggle against capitalism by supporting the battles of workers, oppressed peoples, and super-exploited groupings in all societies. *International Viewpoint* magazine is an invaluable source of information and helps provide linkages for supportive activities among revolutionaries and working-class fighters around the world.

Published under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, *International Viewpoint* presents news about and analyses of events and developments, written by participants in struggles as well as by internationally-respected Marxist economists and political theorists. A February letter sent to subscribers and distributors announced its recent reorganization and briefly described some contents:

**A NEW CRISIS erupts in the Middle East as Israel expels 417 alleged activists from the Islamic fundamentalist organization, Hamas.**

In the first (February) issue of the new 36-page monthly *International Viewpoint*, Lea Tsemel, Dalal Bizri, and Manar Hassan go behind the headlines to explain the meaning of the Israeli government's act and the reasons for the rise of Hamas.

There's also Catherine Samary, recently returned from Sarajevo, on the Yugoslav war, David Finkel on Bill Clinton's first steps and François Pignet on the social and political consequences of the crisis in Somalia — and more.

We think *IV* provides a unique resource for those who want to go beyond catchphrases, labels, and slogans to understand what British foreign secretary Douglas Hurd has recently described as the "new world disorder."

*IV's* access to a wide range of publications and organizations allows the magazine to present documents and articles not usually available, for example:

- A document on the U.S. military operation in Somalia, written by Rakiya Omaar, a Somali lawyer fired from her job with Africa Watch because of her opposition to U.S. intervention, and Alex de Waal, who resigned as Africa Watch director when the U.S. initiative was endorsed by its parent Human Rights Watch organization. This material first appeared in the Flemish newspaper *De Morgen*.
- A debate on the legacy of the 1917 October Revolution in Russia between revolutionary Marxist Ernest Mandel and Gregor Gysi, leader of the parliamentary group in Germany which succeeded the former ruling East German Communist Party. This public discussion, attended by 800 at Berlin's Humboldt University, was organized by *IV's* German sister publication *Inprekor*.
- The Declaration of the Executive Committee of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia and of the leaders of the Russian Branch Unions, and the Statement of the Political Committee of the Party of Labor. These documents addressed Yeltsin's attempt to achieve a "soft" coup d'état.

- "The politics of hate" — involving the destruction of the mosque at Ayodhya and the deepening crisis of the Indian ruling classes — were reported and analyzed by Kunal Chattopadhyay in an article which originally appeared in *Naya Antarjati*, publication of the West Bengal State Committee of the Indian section of the Fourth International.

Through interviews and articles, contributors to *International Viewpoint* bring first-hand information and evaluations of the situations in Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, Africa, the United States and Canada, Central America and Cuba, Southeast Asia, Oceania, and the former Soviet Union.

The subject matter covers a broad range of issues and events: working-class organizations and activities, women's rights struggles across the world, the global capitalist economy, the state of the left in various countries, prospects for socialism — and much more!

For those who are not familiar with *International Viewpoint*, a single trial issue can be obtained for \$4.50. Please see inside back cover of this *Bulletin IDOM* for information about U.S. subscriptions. For interested persons and groups in other countries:

- Europe: 280 FF, £32.
- Rest of world, surface mail: 280 FF, £32.
- Rest of world, air mail: 360 FF, £40.

Send to: *IV*, 2 rue Richard-Lenoir, Montreuil, 93108, France. Make checks payable to PEC (French francs preferred).

## The Working Class Has No Borders!

International solidarity and interaction with working-class struggles around the world is a continuing responsibility of revolutionary socialists in every country. One of the major goals of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* is to contribute information, analysis, and commentary to help such efforts. Each issue is mailed to activists and socialists around the globe — including:

the former Soviet Union • Belgium • Bolivia • Brazil • Canada • Colombia • Ecuador • France • Germany • Great Britain • Greece • Hungary • Ireland • Japan • Mexico • the Netherlands • Peru • the Philippines • Poland • Scotland • South Africa • Spain • Sri Lanka • Sweden • Switzerland • Turkey • Uruguay

Because many of the working-class fighters and Marxists in these countries do not have the resources to subscribe on their own, part of the international circulation of *Bulletin IDOM* has been made possible by financial donations. The thirst for information and political/economic analysis is great! Many more magazines could be sent. *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* has established contacts with militants and Marxists who wish to receive materials — but *Bulletin IDOM* does not have the resources to fulfill all the requests and possibilities

which have opened up, especially with the freer flow of publications into the former Soviet Union and Eastern European areas.

### YOU CAN HELP.

A special Overseas Fund has been launched to help send *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* to revolutionary fighters around the world. Please fill out the form below and send with your contribution.

Make your check out to: *Bulletin IDOM* and note on the check "Overseas Fund." Mail to: *Bulletin IDOM*, 27 Union Square West, Second Floor Room 208, New York, NY 10003. Thank you.

Your Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

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City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for the Overseas Fund.

I shall send an additional \$ \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

# Former CIA Employee on U.S. Role in Central America

Interviewed by Tom Garvey

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*The following interview (transcribed by Lee DeNoyer) was held in Mexico in late 1992. This past year Roettinger worked with the Pastors for Peace Friendship to Cuba and is a member of the Association of National Security Alumni, which publishes a newspaper six times a year entitled *Unclassified*. The address of the Association is 2001 South St. NW, Suite 740, Washington D.C. 20009. The Association has a speakers' bureau whose members frequently lecture at colleges and universities, with the aim, as indicated in this interview, of exposing covert operations of the U.S. government and advocating the abolition of the CIA and reform of the type of operations it carries out.*

*Former agents of imperialism like Roettinger, who have drawn back in moral revulsion and have joined the cause of emancipation of humanity, are especially helpful because their testimony corroborates what opponents of U.S. imperialism have been saying. While we solidarize with Roettinger's sentiments, we should note that revolutionary socialists do not agree with the notion that the CIA acts as a kind of private army apart from the interests of the U.S. ruling class. It is an agency specifically designed to carry out the aims of that class. The reason for the secrecy of its operations is that popular awareness of its heinous actions ("necessary," from the ruling class point of view) would arouse protests, as has happened in the past, especially in the Vietnam era. While there may be dissent within the U.S. ruling class, such as Patrick Moynihan's criticism of the CIA, all the main elements of that class share the basic aims of U.S. imperialism; they disagree only on the tactics of how to pursue those aims. Socialist opponents of imperialism do not of course frame our arguments in terms of what is good or not good for the "national interest" or "national security," but what is good for working people worldwide.*

**Q.: Could you tell us something about your background.**

**A.:** I was commissioned in the Marine Corps as a second lieutenant in 1941. I went to the Quantico, Virginia, Marine Corps school, and so forth, and I was an instructor in Marine Corps schools. When World War II started, being young and ambitious and full of dreams, I requested a combat unit, of course, and in the spring of 1942 I joined the second brigade that went out to the South Pacific. I spent the whole war in the Solomon Islands.

When I came back, I went to Marine Corps schools and then was stationed at Marine Corps headquarters in Washington. In 1950 I was recruited by the CIA. The CIA was only three years old then. I didn't know a thing about it, but it sounded very interesting. And after the war things were kind of dull, so I accepted. By the time I went through a lot of investigation to see what kind of a guy I was, the Korean War had started. Then I thought, "Now what am I going to do, stay in the Marine Corps, or am I going to accept the CIA offer?" So I stayed at Marine Corps headquarters for a while and finally I got the word to report to the CIA. By that time I had heard about the cold weather in Korea, and I hate cold weather. Fighting is bad enough, but fighting in cold weather is terrible, so I was delighted to go in the CIA!

I went on active duty in the CIA in January 1951. I was in training and so forth, and then in 1954 I was assigned to join the group that was going to overthrow the government in Guatemala (and of course we did). I went down to Honduras where there was a team — there were various teams in various places. My team was there to recruit dissident exiles from Guatemala for a contra force. We didn't

use that term in those days, but that's what it was. We got that all ready to go up into Guatemala and start a ruckus up there to indicate that there was a military action going on. This was in cooperation with other activities that the CIA was doing at the time. In other words, they were doing a lot of psychological warfare: dropping leaflets on the capital of Guatemala and working inside Guatemala as much as they could. Of course it was very difficult in those days. But all that came together and we managed to overthrow the government of Guatemala. I got a nice commendation for that, and also when I got back to Washington I got a choice of where I wanted to go to serve, and I chose Mexico City.

I served at the station in Mexico City for several years, and finally became disillusioned after hearing what was going on in Guatemala — the damage we did to that country, which of course was extensive. They never got over it to this day as a matter of fact — we installed a dictator who was promptly executed. The CIA station in Mexico City was situated in the American Embassy and we had what they call diplomatic cover. They called us the political section and, of course, there is a political section in the embassy. There wasn't much secrecy about that; however, there was a lot of secrecy about what we did. I could never find that we were ever doing anything worthwhile. We were messing around in a friendly country. We were hiring lower echelon members of the government to do things for us, and it wasn't worthwhile. I finally got completely fed up with it and I quit the CIA in Mexico City.

I went into business there and ran a very successful business for a number of years. I

finally decided that I didn't want to live in Mexico City anymore and so I got rid of all those businesses and figured I'd settle down here, and now I'm a practicing artist. That's like a lot of other people around here. It's sort of a sideline now, it started out to be my main business, but then I began to wonder about what was going on in Central America, and in 1986 I decided to go down to Nicaragua and find out what the hell was going on down there.

What I saw in Nicaragua in 1986 caused me to practically drop my professional painting and get involved in this political activity that I've been doing ever since. I went right to Washington — I had been up in northern Nicaragua and saw what the Contras were doing to the people; it was so ghastly, so horrible, that I couldn't do anything else but get into this activity. So I went to Washington and met other people with a similar philosophy: former CIA people and others who had turned against the CIA as I had by then. We formed this organization that we have now with an office in Washington called the Association of National Security Alumni, and we are working hard to try to get something accomplished. To try to at least reform the intelligence system in the United States because it's completely out of control. It's not out of "control" because it's controlled by the president of the United States and the National Security Council, but it doesn't answer to anybody else.

The American people don't know anything about it. We don't know how much of your money and my money they spend. Nobody'll tell you, and we don't know what kind of skulduggery they're involved in unless it comes out by accident. We're trying to get

some reason into this thing. You see, the CIA is a completely anti-American organization. It's unconstitutional, as a matter of fact, because the people of the United States have no control over it whatsoever. Congress is supposed to have an oversight committee, but they throw up their hands and say, "We can't handle it." And they don't get any information because it's all top secret. We would like to see it abolished, and Senator Moynihan would like to see it abolished, so we've been working with Senator Moynihan, who submitted a very long, detailed criticism of the CIA, which was accepted by the oversight committee, so we're getting some influence. And of course we're doing a lot of speaking. All of our members go around the country trying to educate the American people as to what's been happening to them all of these years with their money, without their knowledge.

One of the horrible things is that the CIA has caused the deaths of thousands, perhaps millions, of people in the world. The CIA had its own army in Cambodia. It had nothing to do with the U.S. Army; it was a private army of the CIA run by Cambodians and it slaughtered people right and left with no favorable results to the United States. As I say, I'm engaged in that activity now and I'm writing and speaking and doing all I can to alert the American people to these terrible things that have been happening to them.

**Q.: What did you do in Guatemala?**

**A.:** What I did there was clear and simple: organizing Guatemalans into a quasi military force. I didn't do any intelligence operations. We just formed these groups and trained them minimally and armed them minimally and sent them off into Guatemala to create this indication that there was a military action in progress. There were also radio programs that were beamed into Guatemala containing false information regarding military activities. There was a lot of military action on the radio that had nothing to do with what the actualities were. It worked rather well because even the president of Guatemala thought there was strong military action afoot. We had traitors within his government that talked him into resigning his position to save bloodshed and destruction in his country. We put our guy in and he immediately overturned all the good things that the president had done. He outlawed unions, had union leaders assassinated. Many assassinations and tortures went on at that time, and finally he would assassinate himself. Then we put in one of our handpicked persons, and since then Guatemala has had this series of military dictatorships, which has simply destroyed the country.

**Q.: Do you think the CIA was a party to what took place after the coup?**

**A.:** Well, the CIA has been operating in Central America and Guatemala since that time.

There are CIA stations in practically every embassy that the United States has all over the world. And the CIA has been working with the army and our military people in Guatemala. It's a very insidious and disastrous situation.

**Q.: What did you see in Nicaragua?**

**A.:** Well, of course the war was quite different. We had contras and we financed them with millions. The CIA put out a manual, which you may have heard about, teaching how to torture people and how to go into little towns and select the mayor and a couple of other people, and call all the townspeople together and assassinate them in front of them. To terrorize the people of northern Nicaragua. To try to influence them to turn against the Sandinistas. And of course the Sandinistas were actually trying to run a government that was going to help the people. And it was very popular with most of the people in Nicaragua.

I could see that the CIA was deeply involved. You see, what happened was that after the revolution against the other system that we had been supporting for many years, many people fled to Honduras and were met there by the CIA, because it was immediately decided to try to overthrow this new government. Oliver North said that the CIA didn't invent the contras, the Sandinistas invented the contras. Well, of course that was a lot of crap. Because the CIA did invent them and paid them; it was paid for by you and me of course. So the CIA organized the contras and tried to get them to overthrow the Sandinistas, and of course it didn't work. The Sandinistas were very popular and also had a very fine army. Well, at least for Central America it was a very fine army, and it did a good job of controlling the contras, and of course, after a while it all died down and the Sandinistas won. It was all due to this very popular government. Until we got involved again to try to screw it up, which we have done pretty well, I think.

**Q.: So there were two separate involvements in Nicaragua?**

**A.:** Well, the first thing was Somoza, both Somozas. Somoza, the old man, and his son, ran the country, and they had what they called the National Guard. The National Guard was a military group that answered only to the president. It was hated by everybody. It tortured people and all kinds of things, and the Sandinistas developed a revolutionary force that overthrew Somoza. Some of the National Guard fled the country. Some of them went to Costa Rica, but the main body of them went up to Honduras. They were organized up there and the CIA immediately financed them and trained them and sent them back to overthrow the Sandinistas. So that's generally what happened.

**Q.: Just a historical point — the effort to overthrow the Sandinistas began in 1979**

**under the Carter administration, or was it under the Reagan administration?**

**A.:** Yes, it was the Carter administration. It didn't get into full force actually — it wasn't supported as strongly until Reagan became president, of course. He went full bore to overthrow the Sandinistas. Carter got along fairly well with the Sandinistas. Carter had so much heart, he had such a good heart that he was a victim of a lot of activity. In other words, he got confused, I think. If he had supported the Sandinistas completely right from the beginning, it could have been different. But he was kind of... he didn't know whether he ought to do this or not, you know, so the Sandinistas didn't have the support they needed. They requested arms — they didn't have any arms, and of course the United States wouldn't give them any arms — and so they had to get them some place, and the Soviet Union was waiting in the wings, we might say, and began to support them. And the Soviet Union almost had influence in how they ran their country. Actually, they wanted to have this annoying thing going on in our own area, as I'm sure we would've liked to have happen over there. However, the Soviets had no real influence, as far as I can determine, on the Sandinistas or Nicaragua.

The Soviet Union did send instructors over to train the army for the Sandinistas, and so did the Cubans. The Cubans were probably more active than the Russians. Castro was very much interested in helping the Sandinistas. Earlier, when it wasn't going very well against the Somoza government, the Sandinistas fled to Cuba and actually got some training in guerrilla tactics in Cuba and came back. After the Sandinista victory there were some Cubans who came and offered their services as soldiers, so there were a number of Cubans in the Sandinista army in various capacities. So it was one of those things where we blew it again! The Sandinistas would have been great friends of ours if we had treated them right. They had nothing against the United States, not a damn thing. But afterwards they did, because the United States began attacking them.

**Q.: Do you think that countries like Guatemala and El Salvador would be democracies today if it were not for the involvement of the CIA?**

**A.:** No, I don't — well, who knows, there's no way of telling. The Sandinistas had a sort of a democracy; you see, they had the first really democratic elections that Nicaragua had ever had in 1984. They were observed by almost everybody in the world except the United States, and everybody agreed that they were very fair elections, and the Sandinistas only won by something like 60 percent. That demonstrated that it was not a crooked election, because if it was they would've won by 99 or 100 percent. But anyway, they did win, and the United States would not accept that as a fair election. Everybody else was there; they had

observers from many, many countries who said it was a fair election.

Then of course they had the last elections in 1990, which the United States said were absolutely fair elections. Of course they weren't fair elections this time because the United States sent millions of dollars down to the opposition party and said, "Well, the people voted against the Sandinistas." What they really did — and I was there, I was one of the election observers — is that the people of Nicaragua decided that if the Sandinistas won the election, the United States would still be destroying them. So actually they voted against the United States attacking them, and the only way they could do that was to vote for the opposition. And the opposition won, of course.

The opposition has screwed up terribly right now because they don't know what's going on, and this lady that won the presidency, Chamorro, is having a hard time running the country; it's very tough. The United States promised to send them several million dollars aid and is withholding it largely because of Senator Helms. He's really a horrible individual, and he has caused the withholding of this money that we've promised them because of the fact that, he says, the Sandinistas confiscated property of American citizens. Now, this came out in the papers that there are Americans that had their property confiscated. It is simply not true. What happened was that they confiscated the property of Somocistas who fled the country and when they fled to the United States they became American citizens. They're really Nicaraguans and Somocistas, and the Sandinistas say, "We will never give that property back, because they're the people that we overthrew." Anyway, that's a big deal. I listen to the Voice of America and they have this woman who is an assistant to Senator Helms commenting, and boy, is she a right-wing terrorist! She talks about how "they're American citizens and they want their property," but of course they weren't American citizens when they had their property. But I got off the subject.

It's very difficult to say if these countries would have become democracies for a number of reasons. In the first place, they have a very definite wealthy group in each one of these countries, which is determined to control the country; it's a fairly small group. The rest of the population has almost no power and no way to gain power. Now Nicaragua was a wonderful case where the people actually had power and the Sandinistas wanted them to have power. The people said, "Look, this is our country and we want to help run it."

Now in the other countries, for instance, Guatemala, the people have no say at all. They don't have any say; they have elections that are just phony elections, and in El Salvador it's even worse. As long as that situation exists they're going to have revolutions, be-

cause the people nowadays won't stand for that. They had revolutionary activity in El Salvador. As you know, the FMLN was very powerful, and they got to the point where they do have a lot of influence, and they may end up with some power, I don't know. In Guatemala, I don't think the people have any power at all. One of the big problems in Guatemala is that you have these indigenous people living in the mountains that don't even speak Spanish, for one thing, and they are completely separate from the life of Guatemala. They outnumber the wealthy by far, but they have one horrible time because they can't even get together themselves very well. They're scattered in the mountains, and a lot of them have emigrated to Mexico out of fear for their lives. There is a big colony of Guatemalans in the south of Mexico. I think there is a movement for them to go home now, but I don't know whether that's going to work or not. In El Salvador it's the same thing: the natives up in the mountains and so forth want to have their say, and the wealthy elite are determined that they are going to run the country. This is a problem all over Latin America. There are these elite groups that have all the money and they can hire the army and they can control their countries to the detriment of the general population.

Now Mexico is not like that. I think Mexico both enjoys and suffers from its proximity to the United States. The fact that it is as stable as it is, is due largely to the fact that it's right next to the United States; that helps a lot. Most of these countries in Central America — oh man, they're in bad shape. Costa Rica is probably the best one of the bunch because it's the smallest for one thing, and it's had a pretty good government over the years. They have not had any revolutions; they have had some activity, but not revolutions, and I think that they're okay. But in the other countries I think that they're bound to have continuous revolutionary activity, and we [the U.S. government] of course support the elites every time because they do what we want them to do.

**Q.: What is the CIA for, and what is it that the elites do that the United States needs them to do?**

**A.:** Well, the CIA is an organization that answers only to the president of the United States — through the National Security Council, of course — but the NSC is an office of the president also; it has nothing to do with Congress really. So the CIA does what the president of the United States wants it to do — orders it to do, as a matter of fact. Sometimes Congress goes along with some of these things and sometimes not, but they don't have much to say about it. And that's what we're trying to do. We're trying to change that whole system to where the CIA would have to answer to Congress. What we and Senator Moynihan would like to do is abolish the CIA.

The CIA has two separate activities: it has the intelligence gathering/analysis branch, and it has the covert action branch. We would like to stop the covert action branch or turn its activities over to the Defense Department, where it belongs anyway, which would cause it to be controlled by Congress. The other branch, intelligence gathering, is not controlled by Congress either, so we would like to see that turned over to the State Department, which is under control of Congress. In other words we would still have these activities, but they would be controlled by Congress instead of being controlled only by the president.

The CIA works with these elite governments in a way to perpetuate them. In other words, they will work with them and train them and so forth. I don't believe in all that stuff to start with. I don't think it's necessary. I think we ought to have vigilance as to what's going on in the world and in our country, and other people ought to know what's going on in their countries. Now, that can be done without this kind of activity — which is actually to perpetuate elite groups and that sort of thing in other countries against the people themselves. I say, give the people themselves a chance to participate in the control of their own countries. The CIA has always worked against that.

The executive branch of our government usually wants to control the governments of as many countries as possible, so that we can operate successfully in those countries without a whole lot of interference, because we want to make a lot of money. We're money makers; we've got our eye on the dollar. If we can operate, principally in the Third World, without having opposition by the government or by revolutionary groups, we can make a lot more money. Let's face it, that's our job; to make money. If we can't make money, we figure, "Now why aren't we making money? Because this government has too many regulations. OK then, let's just overthrow this government." It's as simple as that.

This is something that I am thoroughly upset by, because I've lived in the Third World since the '50s and I feel very strongly about these poor people of the Third World: Central America, and Mexico, too. They're not getting a fair deal because of the United States. My own country is doing this. I'm a moderately patriotic citizen, I've fought for the United States. I would fight again for it if it were attacked. I'm not going to fight in wars in Iraq and places like that where we have no business, and I would refuse to do it if required. But I would defend the United States if it were attacked, though I doubt it ever will be. It never has been attacked other than when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, the British tried an invasion back in eighteen hundred and something and ran, and Pancho Villa attacked from Mexico one night and then retired in disarray — but we really haven't been attacked like most countries have.

*Continued on page 43*



# Where to Begin? With an American *Iskra*

## Comments on Paul Le Blanc's "Building a Revolutionary Party in the United States"

by Peter Johnson

*The author is a leading figure in a U.S. organization called the Trotskyist League (TL).*

Paul Le Blanc's two-part article "Notes on Building a Revolutionary Party in the United States" in the June and July-August 1993 issues of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* is an excellent starting point for a discussion in these pages of the question Lenin asked more than 90 years ago in his pamphlet *What Is to Be Done?*

Some important strengths of Le Blanc's article are its recognition that (1) building a revolutionary party is a real problem, (2) a solution requires something more than building a democratic-centralist ark according to a "correct" revolutionary blueprint and waiting for the flood of class struggle to float it, (3) this "something more" has to do with developments in the broad vanguard of the working class, as well as the narrow vanguard of those who today consider themselves revolutionaries, and (4) Leninism provides the framework for a solution.

In this article, I want to underline those four points, identify three weaknesses I see in the article, outline a somewhat different analysis of the problem of building a revolutionary party, and offer a different proposal for "what is to be done," or more exactly, "where to begin."

### The Crisis of the Proletarian Vanguard

In a footnote to the introductory section of his article, Le Blanc defines the basis for building a revolutionary party as the coming together of the broad vanguard of class-conscious workers and the narrow vanguard of professional revolutionists:

The term "vanguard" has become unpopular among many on the Left, but the fact remains that a majority of the people are not yet in favor of an uncompromising struggle by the working class or of a revolutionary socialist transformation of society. Those who see the need for such things are, in my opinion, far-sighted minorities — or vanguards. In this discussion contribution I will make reference to two distinct vanguards: a class-struggle vanguard that constitutes a layer of the working class, and a much smaller vanguard of revolutionary socialists. The blending together of these two vanguards

constitutes the basis for a revolutionary vanguard party.

From the demobilized and politically disoriented state of the broad vanguard and the fragmented state of the narrow vanguard, Le Blanc provocatively concludes:

There can be no Leninist party worthy of the name under present conditions. The attempt to create such a party in spite of the conditions will result in a *sect*: a small group with no organic connection with the working class as a whole, a group whose activities have little relevance for the working class, and whose real or imagined wisdom and leadership abilities are incapable of attracting a substantial number of adherents.

At the same time making clear his acceptance of the Leninist framework for party-building, Le Blanc continues:

A simple — or "sophisticated" — rejection of Leninism by would-be revolutionary socialists will also lead to a dead end under today's circumstances. Until the imperialist stage of capitalism and the need for socialist revolution are left behind, Leninism cannot be "transcended," just as we cannot go beyond Marxism until we go beyond the realities which Marxism describes: the predominance and destructiveness of the capitalist mode of production; the existence of capitalists and workers as essential to that mode of production; the ceaseless and all-pervasive struggle, "now hidden, now open," between those two classes.

Returning to these themes in the second part of his article, Le Blanc backs up his assertion that "there can be no Leninist party worthy of the name under present conditions" by quoting the splendid passage from "*Left-Wing" Communism—An Infantile Disorder* in which Lenin explains "an essential condition of the Bolsheviks' success." I have a somewhat different analysis than Le Blanc of the political crises of the proletarian and revolutionary vanguards and so a different understanding of the tasks of Trotskyists today, but I agree fully that both crises exist and that they must be resolved in order to build a Leninist party "worthy of the name."

### Multi-Sectoral Economism is Still Economism

I want briefly to take up three related weaknesses in Le Blanc's article. The first can be seen in a passage on what at first seems to be a secondary question, more related to the debate in *BIDOM* over Black liberation than to party-building, but which in fact is central.

In the 1960s and '70s, critics of the Socialist Workers Party accused it of "sectoralism" and "poly-vanguardism" — giving the social movements of Blacks, women, youth, etc., equal weight with the labor movement, in contradiction to the Marxist dictum that it is the proletariat that must make the revolution.

Le Blanc defends the SWP, quoting the passage from Lenin's 1902 pamphlet *What Is to Be Done?* which says that a "Social-Democrat" [as revolutionary Marxists in Russia then called themselves] should strive to be, not a "trade-union secretary," but a "tribune of the people."

In fact, the ideal leader, as the majority of the members of such circles picture him, is something far more in the nature of a trade-union secretary than a socialist political leader. For the secretary of any, say English, trade union always helps the workers to carry on the economic struggle, he helps them to expose factory abuses, explains the injustices of the laws and of measures that hamper the freedom to strike and to picket (i.e., to warn all and sundry that a strike is proceeding at a certain factory), explains the partiality of arbitration court judges who belong to the bourgeois class, etc., etc. In a word, every trade-union secretary conducts and helps to conduct "the economic struggle against the employers and the government." It cannot be too strongly maintained that *this is still not Social-Democracy*, that the Social-Democrat's ideal should not be the trade-union secretary, but *the tribune of the people*, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of people it affects; who is able to generalize all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set forth *before all* his socialist convictions and democratic demands, in order to clarify for

all and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat. (Lenin, *What Is to Be Done?*, in his *Collected Works*, vol. 5, edited by Victor Jerome, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1961, p. 423, emphasis in the original.)

Le Blanc misunderstands the criticism of the “sectoralism” of the post-Cannon SWP. The criticism is not that the SWP recognized various “sectors” of struggle but rather that in each sector it increasingly behaved, by analogy with *What Is to Be Done?*, like a “trade-union secretary,” not a Social-Democrat. Like the “economists” of Lenin’s day, the SWP increasingly tailed the spontaneous struggle in each sector, limited itself to the minimum demands of each struggle, and failed to “generalize all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation.” The problem was not so much “poly-vanguardism,” although that was also a problem, as “no-vanguardism.”

Behind the “economism by sectors” of the post-Cannon SWP was an objectivist distortion of the theory of permanent revolution into the view that spontaneous reformist struggles for immediate demands, particularly democratic demands, would automatically lead to revolutionary struggle for socialism, as the bosses resisted the reforms and their government repressed the reformers. In places Le Blanc seems to accept this objectivism, as when he attributes to Lenin the oversimplified view that:

[a] consistent and militant struggle for immediate (nonsocialist) economic demands of the working class and especially for the democratic demands of all oppressed sectors of society necessarily leads in the direction of workers’ power and socialism.

However, the central point of *What Is to Be Done?* is that spontaneous struggles for immediate demands do not “necessarily lead in the direction of workers’ power and socialism” — not without the politically conscious intervention and leadership of a revolutionary Marxist party.

### Why Is the Proletarian Vanguard in Crisis?

A second weakness in Le Blanc’s article is its dates and explanation for what he seems to regard as the historic decline and fall of the proletarian vanguard. In the first part of his article, Le Blanc writes:

In the United States, as throughout much of the world, mass working-class movements developed from the 1860s through the 1930s, which included a mass left-wing workers’ subculture, nourished by periodic radical upsurges, that gave relevance to this Leninist orientation.

In the second part he adds:

This subculture of labor radicalism now can only be found in books, artifacts, documentaries, and the memories of old-timers. In the 1940s and ’50s it passed out of existence

thanks to the impact of the Second World War, the corrosive effects of Stalinism, the reformist labor leadership’s deep-going class-collaborationist compromises, the Cold War and anti-Communist hysteria, and especially the extended period of relative economic prosperity which seemed to banish hunger and want among majority sectors of the working class, giving increasing numbers a small but gratifying taste of “the good things in life.” There was also the impact of a largely commercialized mass culture, to a large extent absorbing and/or crowding out the myriad of subcultures within the American working class.

The first problem with this explanation is the repeated references to a radical working-class “subculture.” The broad vanguard of the working class is a political, not a cultural vanguard, and in a multinational, multi-ethnic country like the U.S., it comes from many subcultures. For example, during the 1930s the broad proletarian vanguard in the Detroit auto factories included workers from different subcultures — in many factories, Blacks, Southern whites, and Poles — who seldom mixed off the job except at union and political meetings or related socials, or for an occasional drink after work.

The second problem is the dates. According to Le Blanc the radical working-class vanguard in the U.S. and “throughout much of the world” came into existence in the 1860s, survived through the 1930s, and passed out of existence in the 1940s and 1950s. In fact, however, there was enormous variation in the levels of consciousness and mobilization of the broad vanguard from the 1860s through the 1930s, as there has been since then.

Generally, the levels of political consciousness and mobilization of the proletarian vanguard have been higher in the twentieth century than in the nineteenth, both in the U.S. and internationally. The later 1920s, the 1950s, the early and mid-1960s, and the 1980s were ebb periods, especially in the U.S. But the 1940s, even in the U.S., compare favorably with any time in the nineteenth century and with much of the first four decades of the twentieth century.

The late 1960s and early 1970s saw a sharp increase in working-class consciousness and mobilization worldwide. The success of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers in the Detroit auto plants, the Black Panthers in the Oakland ghetto, and antiwar agitation in the primarily working-class U.S. military in Vietnam make clear that the proletarian vanguard in the U.S. was no exception.

Moreover, what could explain a period that lasted from the 1860s to the 1930s? The development of imperialism might explain the rise of the vanguard, since the 1860s saw the consolidation of five of the seven big imperialist powers, and the following decades saw the economic transformation from competitive capitalism to monopoly capitalism, export of capital, and so on. But then why

should the restabilization of imperialism after World War II have brought on the decline and fall?

On the other hand, if the factors Le Blanc lists to explain the decline after World War II are correct, why did previous periods of capitalist restabilization fail to bring on such a decline? And why did the destabilization of world capitalism at the end of the 1960s fail to bring a new rise?

Or could Le Blanc’s periodization be an “American exception,” connected with the influx of European immigrants into the U.S., whose political effect on the working-class vanguard arguably did extend from the 1860s through the 1930s? But if this is the case, what reason is there to expect a recomposition of the proletarian vanguard without massive new immigration?

A better explanation is needed. Unfortunately, such an explanation is beyond the scope of this short article, but one can be found by pursuing the connection between capitalist equilibrium and disequilibrium and working-class consciousness and organization discussed by Trotsky in his keynote report to the Third Congress of the Communist International in 1921.

With the imperialist war we entered the epoch of revolution, that is, the epoch when the very mainstays of capitalist equilibrium are shaking and collapsing. Capitalist equilibrium is an extremely complex phenomenon. Capitalism produces this equilibrium, disrupts it, restores it anew in order to disrupt it anew, concurrently extending the limits of its domination. In the economic sphere these constant disruptions and restorations of the equilibrium take the shape of crises and booms. In the sphere of interclass relations the disruption of equilibrium assumes the form of strikes, lockouts, revolutionary struggle. In the sphere of interstate relations the disruption of equilibrium means war or — in a weaker form — tariff war, economic war, or blockade. Capitalism thus possesses a dynamic equilibrium, one which is always in the process of either disruption or restoration. But at the same time this equilibrium has a great power of resistance, the best proof of which is the fact that the capitalist world has not toppled to this day. (Trotsky, “Report on the World Economic Crisis and the New Tasks of the Communist International,” 1921, in *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, vol. 1, New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972, p. 174.)

These ideas are also taken up by Ernest Mandel in his 1972 book *Late Capitalism*.

The reasons for the crisis of the proletarian vanguard have an important bearing on the tasks of Trotskyists trying to overcome it. If the proletarian vanguard has been absent for more than fifty years, its recomposition is clearly a very extended process, and patient, long-term cultural work may be appropriate. But if the crisis of the proletarian vanguard is a conjunctural aspect of the current world capitalist disequilibrium, including the collapse of the Soviet Union, its recomposition

is a nearer prospect, and more aggressive, short-term political work is needed.

### “Doing Good Work” Is Necessary but Not Sufficient

The third weakness is Le Blanc’s proposed solution to the problem of building a revolutionary party. In the second part of his article, Le Blanc stresses the need for “an understanding that before all else U.S. revolutionary socialists must be engaged in helping to reconstitute a mass vanguard layer of the working class” and continues:

What is most important, however, is not who joins what organization or which organizations eventually merge. Most important is that the actual political, educational, and cultural work is carried out. It is vitally important that revolutionary socialists commit themselves, above all, to *doing good work* that can help to advance the various struggles of the working class and the oppressed, that can help spread and deepen socialist consciousness, and that can draw together a broad working-class vanguard.

I want to offer a somewhat different analysis of the problem of building a revolutionary party in the U.S. and internationally, which was summarized in an October 8, 1992, letter I wrote to the former Fourth Internationalist Tendency on behalf of the Trotskyist League. The letter was not widely distributed in the FIT or among *BIDOM* supporters because the FIT the previous month had decided to join Solidarity and cease to exist as an independent organization. The remainder of this section is taken directly from that letter.

I want to conclude with a brief summary of the TL’s view of the process of regroupment needed to build a mass revolutionary workers’ party in the U.S. and a mass Fourth International. The process involves five inter-related developments:

1. The deepening economic, social and political crisis of capitalism.
2. An upsurge in the struggles of the working class and the specially oppressed.
3. The political recomposition of the proletarian vanguard.
4. Revolutionary regroupment of a sizeable part of the vanguard into a Leninist-Trotskyist party.
5. The political regeneration and organizational reconstruction of the Fourth International.

I have listed these elements from “most objective” to “most subjective” from the standpoint of Trotskyist militants today. In fact, this is a real direction of causality. The deepening capitalist crisis will tend to raise the level of class struggle. The rising level of class struggle will promote the recomposition of the proletarian vanguard. The recomposition of the proletarian vanguard will make possible the building of mass revolutionary parties. And the struggle to build these parties will allow Trotskyists to test their different orientations and sort out their political and organizational differences.

The five elements also could be listed from “most subjective” to “most objective,” and

this too is a real direction of causality. Trotskyists must resolve the political and organizational crisis of the Fourth International enough to fulfill their role as the consistently revolutionary pole for regroupment of vanguard militants into a party. A party must be built — nationally and internationally — in order to promote the political recomposition of the vanguard. The political vanguard must develop to lead the working-class upsurge. And the working class must deepen and then resolve the capitalist crisis through the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship.

In general, the TL favors the method of proceeding from resolution of the crisis of the Fourth International to resolution of the capitalist crisis, since it begins with the link in the chain about which we can do most. But we recognize that Trotskyists must simultaneously engage with all aspects of the process.

We must attempt to resolve the political and organizational crisis of the Fourth International through political discussion and joint work. We must promote the political recomposition of the proletarian vanguard and attempt to bring about its revolutionary regroupment through propaganda and united-front work, fusions and splits. We must attempt to raise the level of consciousness and struggle through agitation and organizing among the workers and the oppressed. And we must contribute as much as we can to the deepening of the capitalist crisis and its socialist resolution, through leading mass struggles.

### Where to Begin?

I want to conclude this article with a brief answer to two questions Le Blanc asks in the introduction to his article:

Serious revolutionary socialists naturally give attention to the questions: (a) what are the practical tasks they should set for themselves? and (b) what is the manner in which they should organize themselves to work for the accomplishment of those tasks?

A useful analogy can be made between the situation of Trotskyists in the U.S. today and that of Lenin, Plekhanov, and the other Russian “Social-Democrats” in 1900, two years after the formal founding of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party. The twenty-year struggle of Plekhanov and other early Russian Marxists and the strikes of the 1890s had created a Social Democratic movement with a modest base in the working class, but tsarist repression, the retreat of the Russian proletariat, and the developing political crisis of the Second International had prevented the consolidation of a real party.

Lenin, Plekhanov, and their cothinkers founded the newspaper *Iskra* and the magazine *Zarya* as vehicles for a process of revolutionary Marxist regroupment combining political clarification with organizational unification, similar to what is needed today. In 1900, in the “Declaration of the Editorial Board of *Iskra*,” Lenin explained the *Iskra* project as follows:

To establish and consolidate the Party means to establish and consolidate unity

among all Russian Social-Democrats, and, for the reasons indicated above, such unity cannot be decreed, it cannot be brought about by a decision, say, of a meeting of representatives; it must be worked for. In the first place, it is necessary to work for solid ideological unity, which should eliminate discordance and confusion that — let us be frank! — reign among Russian Social-Democrats at the present time. This ideological unity must be consolidated by a Party program...

As we have said, the ideological unity of Russian Social-Democrats still has to be created, and to this end it is, in our opinion, necessary to have an open and all-embracing discussion of the fundamental questions of principle and tactics raised by the current-day “Economists,” Bernsteinians, and “critics.” Before we can unite, and in order that we may unite, we must first of all draw firm and definite lines of demarcation. Otherwise, our unity will be purely fictitious, it will conceal the prevailing confusion and hinder its radical elimination. It is understandable, therefore, that we do not intend to make our publication a mere storehouse of various views. On the contrary, we shall conduct it in the spirit of a strictly defined tendency. This tendency can be expressed by the word Marxism, and there is hardly need to add that we stand for the consistent development of the ideas of Marx and Engels and emphatically reject the equivocating, vague, and opportunist “corrections” for which Eduard Bernstein, P. Struve, and many others have set the fashion. But although we shall discuss all questions from our definite point of view, we shall give space in our columns to polemics between comrades. Open polemics, conducted in full view of all Russian Social Democrats and class-conscious workers, are necessary and desirable in order to clarify the depth of existing differences, in order to afford discussion of all disputed questions from all angles, in order to combat the extremes into which representatives, not only of various views, but even of various localities, or various “specialties” of the revolutionary movement, inevitably fall. (Lenin, “Declaration of the Editorial Board of *Iskra*,” in his *Collected Works*, vol. 4, edited by Victor Jerome, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972, pp. 354–5, emphasis in original.)

Essentially, what is needed in the U.S. today is a democratic-centralist Trotskyist propaganda group, linked to a Trotskyist International, to carry out a regroupment project similar to *Iskra*. If the regroupment project succeeds, Trotskyists in the U.S. will have our “1903 Congress” in time to prepare for our “1905 Revolution,” in which we will build our Bolshevik party “worthy of the name” to lead our “1917 Revolution.”

A unified U.S. sympathizing section of the Fourth International (USFI) campaigning for Trotskyism in the workers’ movement and at the same time promoting debate among Trotskyists and other revolutionary socialists might be able to carry out such a project, but, unfortunately, it does not exist. Hypothetically, either of the two USFI publications in the U.S., *BIDOM* or *Socialist Action*, might

*Continued on page 43*

# “This I Cannot Forget”

*This I Cannot Forget: The Memoirs of Nikolai Bukharin's Widow*, by Anna Larina, introduction by Stephen F. Cohen (New York: W.W.Norton & Co., 1993). 352 pages; photographs. \$24.95.

Reviewed by Ben Stone

To many young Marxists who have studied the history of the Soviet Union, the recently published book by Anna Larina will make a strong impression. The book will have an even stronger impact on those, who, like this reviewer, belong in the category of “old-timers.” For we have followed the “Russian Question” from the very beginning and we avidly follow every new development and revelation with never flagging interest. The truth about the Russian Revolution and its Bolshevik leadership, together with its universal significance, has been so encrusted with the mud heaped upon it by the Stalinists, neo-Stalinists, and imperialist sycophants that it will take another political earthquake to blast the truth to the top once again.

Anna Larina's memoir would be an important document even if her husband had not been a world-famous revolutionary, but this certainly adds to its value. Nikolai Bukharin (1888–1938) joined the revolutionary Marxist wing of the antitsarist underground during his teenage years. Shortly before World War I, living in exile, he had become associated with what many — including Lenin — considered an “ultraleft” current in the world socialist movement, although Lenin soon embraced some of his young associate's ideas regarding the state and revolution. An important Marxist theoretician (author of *Imperialism and World Economy*; *The Economic Theory of the Leisure Class*; *The ABCs of Communism*, with Preobrazhensky; *Historical Materialism*; and other still valuable works), Bukharin played an important role in the Russian Revolution, in the new Soviet Republic established in 1917, and in the Communist International formed in 1919. In his last testament (1922) Lenin called him “the favorite of the whole Party,” but the dying leader added a critical note: “his theoretical views can be classified as Marxist only with great reserve, for there is something scholastic about him (he has never made a study of dialectics and I think never fully understood it).”

At first Bukharin was involved in the antibureaucratic and ultraradical Left Communist faction in the Russian Communist Party, but by the mid-1920s he shifted rightward, forming an ill-fated alliance with the bureaucratic dictatorship of Stalin against Trotsky and the Left Opposition. Favoring far-reaching policies that would undercut the working class but strengthen Russia's vast peasantry by encouraging “free market” dynamics

(which Trotsky feared could open the way to capitalist restoration), Bukharin and those around him were destroyed when Stalin made a pseudo-“left” turn involving forced collectivization of the land and breakneck industrialization. The destruction was political in 1928–29 and physical during the purge trial frame-ups of 1936–38. Not surprisingly, Mikhail Gorbachev used Bukharin's rehabilitation and newly created prestige in the late 1980s to justify his own promarket *perestroika* reforms.

Anna Larina was 20 years old in 1934 when she married Bukharin, who was 25 years her senior. She was a beautiful young woman, while Bukharin was a short, middle-aged man, unprepossessing in appearance, although possessing considerable charm and charisma.

Anna was the daughter of Yuri Larin, a leading Bolshevik intellectual who moved in the circles of those close to Lenin, which is how she met Bukharin. There seems to be no question that in spite of the difference in age and appearance, there was a deep love relationship between the two. Anna's entire life, after she was released from the Gulag in 1959 [triggered by the Khrushchev revelations], was devoted to the rehabilitation of Bukharin, which was finally attained on March 4, 1988, 50 years after his trial and execution. In April of 1988 this reviewer wrote a piece for *BIDOM* entitled “The Rehabilitation of Nikolai Bukharin,” which took note of this historic event.

About a year before Bukharin was imprisoned, Anna gave birth to their son, Yury. It is one of the poignant moments in Anna's life that she became reunited with Yury after her release from the Gulag. She had not seen him during the entire 20 years of her imprisonment. When they finally met, Yury was 21 years old. He joined his mother in their long struggle for Bukharin's rehabilitation.

Anna Larina and Nikolai Bukharin were married for only four years, from 1934 to 1938. Actually, three years, for in the fourth year, Bukharin was imprisoned in the infamous Lubyanka prison in Moscow, where many of the Bolshevik leaders were executed by Stalin. But Anna knew Bukharin intimately for a number of years prior to their marriage. Thus, she knew him well personally, but it is questionable how knowledgeable she was regarding his political and theoretical views, or the differences between Bukharin's views and those of the Left Opposition.

Stephen F. Cohen, who has written an informative biography of Bukharin, has argued that during his trial Bukharin was “astonishingly defiant,” although Anna's detailed recollections in this book — that her husband

was forced to mouth the most humiliating lies and slanders against himself and others — stands as a devastating counterpoint to the image suggested by Cohen. Nonetheless, Cohen's scholarly introductory essay is an important addition to this volume. No less valuable are Bukharin's “Last Testament to Party Leaders” and his final letter to his wife (which she received 54 years after it was written!), the latter including the revelation that while in Stalin's prison he had written “a big philosophical work...[which is] a very mature work in comparison to my earlier writing, and, in contrast to them, *dialectical* from beginning to end,” as well as a small volume of poems and the first seven chapters of an autobiographical novel. These manuscripts were recovered from the files of the KGB in 1992 and, hopefully, will in the near future be available to an international readership.

One thought, above all others, troubled Anna during Bukharin's trial. Why was Bukharin groveling in the dust, confessing to monstrous crimes that he could not possibly have committed? Why was he glorifying Stalin when he knew that Stalin had him marked for death?

Anna did not find the answer to this troubling question, but she did not doubt that Stalin used Bukharin's family as hostage to obtain the confessions. At no time did she lose faith in Bukharin, nor did she lose faith in the Old Bolsheviks, the ones that she knew were responsible for leading the Bolshevik revolution and creating the Soviet Union.

One of the problems with Anna Larina's account is that it sounds like Bukharin was the centerpiece of the Moscow Trials. Leon Trotsky gets short shrift in her book, although it is well known that Trotsky was the chief defendant in the show trials, that he was tried in absentia, found guilty, and condemned to death if found on Russian soil. Stalin carried out the death penalty against Trotsky but as the world knows, it was not to be on Russian soil.

Anna spent about 20 years in Stalin's Gulag, from 1939 to 1959. During that period she underwent many traumatic experiences, being subjected to many interrogations, and being transferred innumerable times, from one camp or prison to another. She narrates that at one point she was scheduled for execution and was actually being led down the path to the execution spot, but inexplicably it was called off at the last moment. The conditions in most of the detention places were indescribably bad, and how she survived the terrible ordeal of Bukharin's year-long imprisonment (when Stalin ended the cat and mouse game for which he was famous, by executing him), the 20 years she spent in the Gulag, then the almost 30 years of

struggle for Bukharin's rehabilitation, is one of the unique stories of the twentieth century.

One of the difficulties of this book is that it is told in flashbacks. It is not one straight narrative that flows from beginning to end. While the narrative is fascinating in its overall content and detail, it swings like a pendulum from something that is going on in the present at a particular camp to a memory of the past that is triggered while going to sleep at night. The flashbacks continue even after release from the camps. Still it stands as a most unique story told by one of the very few survivors of those terrible years. Some of the flashbacks, however, provide valuable recollections of the Soviet republic's early years, as well as vivid images of the layer of Old Bolsheviks who were the milieu of Larina's parents and husband.

Anna Larina writes this harrowing tale with eloquence, emotion, and great poignancy. Besides the devastating experience related earlier, when she went down the path for the expected execution, there were many other incidents that took place in the camps. But let Anna tell about it in her own words.

I spent only a few months in the Tomsk camp, but it was there I had to endure from afar my husband's ordeal — the infamous "Bukharin trial" and his execution. There, too, I began to feel sharply the tragedy of that time and came to perceive it, quite apart from the horrors I personally experienced, as the tragedy of the entire Soviet nation. In our camp alone, there were some four thousand wives of the men now known as traitors to the motherland. Far from being unique, the Tomsk camp of confinement was one of many....In the mind of the camp command, I suppose, most of us "chesirs" ["members

of families of traitors to the motherland"] had a kind of abstract "enemy" quality, because they themselves had no idea what was actually going on in the country. They merely saw a continuing flow of transports of prisoners, one after another. The people had become their own enemy.

The incidents narrated above by Anna Larina could be multiplied many times over to describe the horrible conditions of the camps. Nothing was ever done to alleviate those conditions. Many did not survive. Anna Larina was one who did survive and lived to tell the story. Today at the age of 78, she still retains her faith in the future of the human race. Anna Larina's book is another link in the chain of continuity with the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. □

## Former CIA Employee on U.S. Role in Central America

*Continued from page 38*

Anyway, if we were attacked, I would be delighted to defend my country. But I don't believe in this "world order" we've established, where we try to control other peoples' governments to our financial benefit, and that's the whole thing.

**Q.: Do you have any particularly horrifying personal experiences that might jar a few stone heads?**

**A.:** The only horror stories that I've witnessed have been in Nicaragua. There was an attack by the contras where they killed women and one

little child. I would have loved to have Ronald Reagan at the funeral of that one little child that they executed. I tell you, he should have been there, he should have seen this. I cried openly; tears rolled down my face. As a matter of fact, I'm tempted to cry right now when I think about it. It was so awful. To see the devastation that the United States has caused in these countries is almost too much to stand. Fortunately, I wasn't in Guatemala while that went on, I was well out of that, but I was involved in Nicaragua, and I tell you that left me no alternative other than to get in this fight. That's what caused me to begin. I just cannot stand to see the United

States financing murder and raping and torture, and we did. The American people have to know that we sponsored this kind of activity. It's absolutely outrageous and I defy anybody to defend that kind of thing. Some say, "Oh, we're overthrowing Communism." That's pure crap. We're not overthrowing Communism; we're promoting it, if anything. Of course, Communism, who knows, anybody who defines it has got a different definition from somebody else. Let's say that the government in Nicaragua was leftist. Leftist to me means supporting the people. Rightist to me means supporting the elite, and I cannot go along with that. □

## Where to Begin? With an American *Iskra*

*Continued from page 41*

carry out such a project on their own, but, unfortunately, at the moment neither is likely to try.

*BIDOM* would have to reject the USFI majority conception of Trotskyism as a "minor tributary" of the world revolutionary movement, and its supporters in *Solidarity* would have to decide to fight for Trotskyism there or get out. *Socialist Action* would have to adopt a regroupment orientation that rec-

ognized the relevance of Lenin's point, "To establish and consolidate the Party means to establish and consolidate unity among all Russian Social-Democrats," defined as both ideological and organizational unity.

No other Trotskyist publication in the U.S. today, including the *TL's International Revolution*, has enough authority in the Trotskyist movement to be an American *Iskra*, although a major success in the class struggle or a significant regroupment could change this.

Meanwhile, those who agree with the perspective outlined above should continue to explain patiently the need for the political regeneration and organizational reconstruction of the Fourth International as the starting point for resolving the international crisis of revolutionary leadership and building a revolutionary party in the U.S. □

October 15, 1993

## Latin American-Style Dictatorship in Moscow

*Continued from page 4*

be confiscated — a daily run, that is — or a newspaper could be closed altogether. So far this punitive censorship is ineffective; it seems like the papers are just disregarding it. But for a few days the leading newspapers appeared with "white spaces" [articles deleted], and that's when I noticed increased interest in Western radio broadcasts, which once again became alternative sources of information.

**Q. Well, thank you. We hope the police won't bother you any more.**

**A.** I hope so too. I can say that during the 13 months I spent in jail under Brezhnev I was treated better. I was fed better. Apparently under Yeltsin they don't feed prisoners. During the time we were held Sunday and Monday nobody bothered to feed us at all. And under Brezhnev at least I wasn't beaten. Others were, but I wasn't. So my experience under Brezhnev was preferable.

I think the problems of our country aren't going to be resolved as long as the government continues to carry out this insane social-economic policy. This policy is the ticking time bomb that will undermine this regime. It's this policy that resulted in the violations of the constitution, in the disbanding of the parliament, in censorship, etc. This social-economic policy will finally cause the regime to crash, because one cannot continue to plunder one's own people. □

## What is the Meaning of the Recent Events in Moscow?

*Continued from page 3*

as institutions to control workers and ensure that instructions from on high are implemented. In addition, they also played a certain welfare role by administering the social welfare funds.

With this function removed, they will be forced to either win workers' allegiance or face extinction.

According to reports from trade union activists in Moscow, during the wave of repression that swept across Russia after the Yeltsin forces seized the White House on October 4, the president of the FITU, Igor Klochkov, was attacked by the government, which warned him that if he did not resign, the union would be dissolved. This would mean that the union federation's property would be confiscated and there would be no more automatic dues check-off.

According to the *Financial Times* of October 13, Klochkov resigned.

### The Emperor Has No Clothes

Despite the solid support Yeltsin's dictatorial rule has among governments of the capitalist class abroad and their international financial institutions and mass media, it is far from clear that Yeltsin will be able to retain the power he has grabbed.

The more aggressively he promotes the IMF reforms, the narrower becomes his base. Not only was Yeltsin forced to disband parliament, which had previously been behind him, but he also had to dissolve the Supreme Court and the local governing councils, as mentioned above, and even the Federation Council — made up of local administrators who in their majority had been his own appointees.

It was this latter body that Yeltsin, after the April referendum, had relied on as an alternative parliament to draft his new constitution and approve it and to become the "upper house" of parliament under the new system he planned to impose.

As Yeltsin sets about implementing IMF-inspired policies that will lead to increasing unemployment and deeper poverty for most workers, because of the fact that he has eliminated any intermediary bodies, the victims will have nobody but Yeltsin to blame for their suffering. Yeltsin may himself be forced, like his predecessors, to print more money and issue ever new subsidies to guarantee some minimum level of survival for those affected. Otherwise, his already thin popularity will undoubtedly evaporate very quickly.

Meanwhile, there is no reason to believe that Yeltsin's imperialist bosses — no matter how hard he tries to satisfy them and even if he does so — will inject sufficient capital to do anything more than enrich a few apparatchiks and foreign imperialists.

Russia, according to the Russian government's economics ministry, needs \$35–50 billion annually in foreign investments to be-

gin to revive the economy. It expects to receive from \$1.5 to 2 billion a year until 1995. In 1992, it received only \$150–200 million. Only 200,000 workers are now employed by foreign capital (*Financial Times*, October 7, 1993).

As one considers these figures, it becomes obvious that this entire reform program is a thinly veiled scheme whereby a tiny sector of the population of the world — in Russia and abroad — hopes to get phenomenally rich by turning Russia into an underdeveloped, semicolonial colony for sale to the highest bidder. It is only a matter of time before the entire operation is exposed to the Russian workers for what it is.

### "You and What Army?"

How does Yeltsin plan to survive this?

Can he rely on the military?

As was mentioned above, in the weeks before his September 21 decree, Yeltsin visited the garrisons from which he called up forces to back him for the storming of the parliament on October 4. He evidently "won" support there by increasing officers' pay (*Financial Times*, October 5, 1993). Even so, it was an eclectic collection of forces of different types taken from different garrisons that ultimately came to his aid. They came from outlying regions, and only officers manned the tanks and armored personnel carriers.

The concern of Yeltsin's cabinet to guarantee itself with a loyal guard was reflected in one of its first decisions after Yeltsin disbanded parliament. Entitled "On Strengthening the Defense of the Social Order," it called for "40,000 more recruits into the forces of the Interior Ministry and the founding of a volunteer corps to patrol the neighborhoods" (*Financial Times*, September 24, 1993). However, such a force — a professional or mercenary army — could hardly be sufficient to police the workers in their millions when they decide to resist the reforms.

The existing army has itself, in fact, been a victim of the reforms. Only 13 percent of the draftees in the spring of 1993 reported for duty, with the army population having fallen from 4 million to 1.8 million soldiers during recent years. Because of the dismantling of the plan and the imposition of market reforms, many garrisons have no fuel, ammunition, or equipment. There is a dire housing shortage and a shortage of money to pay wages, so that some soldiers were not paid at all in June. Some bases are without electricity and gas, according to General Valery Mironov at a briefing for foreign reporters on September 23. Many garrisons are also without hot water and soap. Morale in the army is very low and the homicide and suicide rates are high.

One cannot help but be amazed that the Georgian president (and dictator), Eduard Shevardnadze, should chastise the Yeltsin government for not sending troops to help him

defend Sukhumi against Abkhazian rebels. Couldn't he see that Yeltsin, facing a profound crisis of his own, was not even certain that he had troops to defend himself!

As General Mironov put it, the army has retained "a certain combat capacity," but it is not at all predictable against whom.

### The Generalized Offensive Has Begun

Yeltsin plans to neutralize the opposition and impose his own supporters in all positions of power.

On October 4, according to an ITAR-TASS release, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin signed a far-reaching decree authorizing ministries of communication, transport, the media, fuel, and energy sources to replace heads or other top officials of any enterprise, regardless of the form of ownership, and administer them as they see fit, with any violators subject to punishment for violation of the martial law regime.

Yeltsin has closed down at least 13 newspapers and banned at least eight political parties. Although he promised to lift the curfew and end martial law on October 18, an atmosphere of fear hangs over the population, now living as it does under a new dictatorship — this one backed by imperialism.

By all indications, Yeltsin has accepted the historic assignment of presiding over the capitalist counterrevolution in Russia.

### Where Do We Go From Here?

One prosocialist activist in the Party of Labor movement described the atmosphere so far as "more like under McCarthy than Pinochet." A friend in St. Petersburg reported that there is a pervasive atmosphere of fear, of not knowing what will happen next.

Among the thousands arrested the night of October 3–4 were three activists in the Party of Labor — Boris Kagarlitsky, Vladimir Kondratov, and Alexander Segal. The first two were also Socialist deputies in the Moscow City Council that has since been disbanded by the pro-Yeltsin mayor of Moscow. They were badly and repeatedly beaten.

A common criminal who witnessed the beatings, upon his release, contacted Boris' wife Irina to let her know what was going on. Within hours, an international call for help to free the detainees went out on E-mail indicating the precise police station to which protest telegrams should be sent.

The response was significant enough to force the police to free the three prisoners.

A foreign supporter was on the telephone with Irina when Boris arrived from detention, beaten but relieved. His words on the phone to his supporters were: "International solidarity works."

If nothing else, this incident shows graphically that while much in the former Soviet Union remains the same, the opportunities for close collaboration with revolutionaries there

have profoundly improved as a result of the glasnost reforms. We must do everything possible to take advantage of these opportunities.

The events taking place in Russia are a vivid demonstration of the meaning of IMF reforms for working people, not only in Russia but everywhere. These events show that democracy is incompatible with the implementation of IMF dictates and that the IMF policies lead to poverty for the masses of the population.

Yet in this case, the governments of the major capitalist powers, because they support the IMF policies, are forced to openly support the imposition of a one-man dictatorship because that is indispensable for the implementation of the IMF policies. This situation provides a unique opportunity to expose these

governments' hypocrisy and reveal their true motives — pursuit of profits.

Over the next few months, as the events unfold, we must make special efforts to maintain contact and collaborate in whatever ways we can. We must do whatever we can to assist and support the small but significant groups of pro-socialist and pro-worker activists whose influence is bound to grow as there is no other alternative leadership. We must also be ready to help new movements of workers and revolutionary-minded activists who will develop out of the struggles that are on the horizon.

We must be geared up for action. To do this, a new committee has been formed, the U.S. Committee for Democratic and Human Rights in Russia, focusing on two demands:

- Human rights and freedom of the press,

**assembly, political and trade union organization for all Russians!**

- **Hands off opposition groups, including trade unionists and democratic socialists!**

We need to be in a position to help stay the hand of repression, which Yeltsin, this time with imperialist backing, is preparing to bring down. We need to find ways to help give the workers in Russia time to forge the organizations they need to defend themselves against these attacks. This movement must be as broad as possible.

Please join with our effort! The fate of future generations of Russians, and perhaps of humanity, may be at stake. □

October 17, 1993

## Organizing Southern Workers: Key to Independent Political Action

*Continued from page 15*

Working class leadership, however, requires an organizational base. Without this base, the poverty and lack of information, education, time, and political training resulting from class and national oppression will be the very factors that will force African American workers to surrender leadership in the movement for Black political power to other classes who (while suffering discrimination) are not victimized in society in the same ways as Black workers are. Black workers in the North are more likely to have such a base, because of the existence of the trade union movement and the various Black trade union coalitions, associations, and caucuses that have developed within it over the years.

This development among Black workers in the South, however, is really just beginning in a conscious way, taking shape over the last ten years. This has been partly due to the failure of the trade union movement over the past decade to make a concerted effort to organize labor in the South.

This failure by the trade union movement has been partly due to labor not having its own political party to help it fight for a working class political agenda. The turn to business unionism has been a major consequence.

Instead of waging a united challenge against the corporate attack on labor, many of the top international union officials opposed the strikes and other rank-and-file fight-backs and pressured their members to grant concessions in order to "buy time" while they made watered-down appeals to the Democratic Party for labor law reforms. Establishing a sort of detente between labor and capital in the Democratic Party was seen as the answer by these union officials.

This push for cooperation between labor and capital has not only weakened labor as a political force; it is also facilitating and encouraging a reorganization of the working class in the workplace in ways that serve to weaken the rank-and-file trade union movement.

"Quality circles," "team concepts," and other

worker-management cooperation schemes are being used to justify speed-ups and reductions in the workforce. This is causing tensions among workers because the team orientation encourages them to blame each other for not carrying their load to meet management production quotas. It is also causing divisions between skilled and unskilled workers, which also create racial tensions. This has made union organizing even more difficult.

Business unionism has thus de-emphasized the need to organize the unorganized, especially in the South and particularly among low-wage workers. Instead of financing more concerted and aggressive efforts to organize the unorganized, more union resources go for labor lobbying the Democratic Party and to support so-called pro-labor Democratic candidates. Breaking with the Democratic Party means freeing labor from having to make such divisive and reactionary political compromises.

Workers in the South have in the main, thus, been forced to build their own organizations without the resources and the solidarity of the trade union movement. In fact, Black workers in the South have been at the forefront of organizing a rank-and-file, predominantly workplace-based movement to unite and empower all workers. By building Black worker organizations, African American workers have been able to access some resources in the African American community and some (but not enough) from allies to help build this movement.

In many cases the worker organizations in this growing movement have combined the fight for better wages, working conditions, and unionization with demands against race and sex discrimination and for community environmental justice. The national campaign to win justice for the Hamlet workers was organized and promoted by this movement.

Unions growing out of this movement in the South (the Workers Fairness Campaign) may be formed in various ways. Some will

result from a vote in an NLRB (National Labor Relations Board) election; others will get recognition from the employers because they have built a movement strong enough; and others will form without a labor board election or formal employer recognition, because they have built an organization at the workplace which expands its membership over time as it carries out campaigns to improve and change working conditions. What will make these unions strong will be their unity as rank-and-file workers in a democratic labor movement, regardless of how they were formed and what national or independent union they belong to.

The connection of African American workers to the struggle for Black political power and basic democratic rights is a powerful source of strength for this movement. The racial polarization of Southern communities thus makes the leadership of African American workers in organizing all workers at the workplace very important. It is most definitely a main starting point, and indeed an anchoring point, toward organizing unity among all workers at other levels.

This movement cannot depend on the top echelons of the trade unions to extend solidarity to workers' struggles in the South. The legitimacy of these worker organizations and new unions must not be dependent on winning an NLRB election. The recognition needed by these worker organizations and new unions is from their rank-and-file sisters and brothers in the trade unions in the U.S. and throughout the world — a political recognition of concrete worker solidarity.

Concrete programs are needed which link the resources and solidarity of the U.S. trade union movement to the movement to organize the South. The new worker organizations and unions developing in the workplaces and communities in the South must be adopted as sister organizations by unions and supporters outside the South.

This can begin a process of rank-and-file

fusion that can help to more democratize and politicize the established trade unions. This will expand the character, power, and organizational definition of the U.S. labor movement by the inclusion of the new forms and institutions of worker organization that are developing in the South.

The tragedy in Hamlet, North Carolina, presents the sharpest and clearest case for why workers need to organize unions with or without the involvement of the NLRB or formal recognition from the employers. In fact, Hamlet and the direction of the entire U.S. economy places a whole new question before Southern workers, which is "Organize or Die."

The company's anti-union campaign gives a pin head view of the lengths the corporations will go to, to prevent workers from having power in the economy. It is like a military assault against the workers. High-paid union busters cause so much tension to divide the workers that it makes conditions almost unbearable. Many workers will withdraw their support for the union in hopes that the company will end its attacks.

The company's anti-union campaign shows workers just how vicious the employer can be. It shows how without an organization the employer can defeat the courage of an individual worker, no matter how strong, driving him or her to quit, make mistakes and get fired, or explode in uncontrollable rage. This is why many workers at Standard Products and other workplaces are making the decision that even if they lose an NLRB election, they must go on and form the union. In fact, some are looking at forming unions without engaging in the NLRB election.

This is an important juncture in our efforts to organize workers in North Carolina. We believe that we are nearing an important juncture for the emergence of a labor movement in the South and for advancing the movement for Black political power. They are interrelated in their development and in their forward motion.

"Organize or Die" must be the slogan for organizing in the South. It must help to embody the sense of urgency and momentum to organize reflected by Hamlet and countless other threatening but less tragic examples.

Very much like the Montgomery bus boycott and the fight against racial segregation, we must fight to organize workers' power to help bring democracy to the workplace.

This will also serve to strengthen the African American working class leadership in the struggle for Black political power needed to advance the struggle for African American national liberation.

This means that the U.S. trade union movement must be revitalized through its rank and file, by its connections to the broader social and political struggles for democracy led by the oppressed nationalities and women. In fact, the rank-and-file struggles for democracy within the trade unions must be con-

sciously linked to the movements to organize the unorganized, to empower those sections of the working class that have most been denied democracy.

The struggles for democracy among the least organized sections of the working class are centered primarily in the South among African Americans and in the Southwest among Chicano/Mexicano/Latino and Indian peoples. The organization and unionization of these workers is thus an essential aspect of their struggles for national self-determination.

By turning those areas, which are bastions of [anti-union] right-to-work laws, weak unions, and conservative and racist governments, into more democratic and progressive regions, the balance of power will be altered in favor of the forces for real social change. This can help move the struggles of African Americans, other oppressed peoples, and the working class as strategic allies forward to the political offensive.

In addition to a strong labor movement, a coordinated mass political offensive requires a mass political movement and a national political organization. In order for the working class to make the ultimate break with the two corporate parties, what is needed is the formation of a national independent political party with oppressed nationalities and women playing a central role.

The formation of such a party, however, will not occur overnight. It will not emerge out of an agitational campaign making strong declarations about breaking with the Democratic and Republican parties. Nor will it be brought into being by a narrow grouping of radicals waging polemics against "impure" expressions of independent political action.

Such a party must be engendered by a working class mass political movement which can help to foster and embody a variety of independent working class political campaigns, expressions, and organizational forms of political action. This will begin to establish concretely the political independence and self-determination of the working class and oppressed nationalities from the two corporate-dominated political parties.

Trade unions, workers, and community-based organizations must take the lead in building an independent political action movement. They can run candidates for office, initiate referendums on key issues, set up government municipalities in large unincorporated African American majority communities, lead campaigns for community control of public and private institutions and for government accountability to people's institutions, organize political platform assemblies, and directly present demands accompanied by mass mobilizations to government bodies at various levels.

The movement for independent political action will help to broaden the working class's and African American people's understanding of political power as a popular power, where the people themselves have a

more direct control over the major institutions affecting their lives, including governmental power at all levels.

The trade union movement is an essential and fundamental component. However, it cannot be the sole mass base for a national political party. This is particularly true because at this time the trade unions encompass only about 15 percent of the U.S. working class.

Trade unions are also on the defensive, which suggests that the major focus of a party based on the unions would be to fight to protect the organizational integrity and bargaining rights of existing national unions. This fight is necessary, but it is not broad enough to address the needs of the working class as a whole, especially the oppressed nationalities and permanently displaced sections.

A labor party based mainly on the trade unions, however, may be one of the various political organizational forms that will develop to help consolidate a base and leadership within the working class as part of developing the larger working class movement for independent political action.

The oppressed nationalities and women may also develop special forms of working class political organization to help ensure their leadership and to express the national self-determination of their peoples. All will contribute to the shaping of the social character and political program of the larger movement and party that develops.

A network of working class activists based in the actual struggles of the rank and file in the trade union movement, among the unemployed, and in the oppressed nationality communities throughout the country is greatly needed to help popularize and unite these struggles.

A network should not now think of itself in terms of forming a new political organization or as a party-building "center." It should form to help bring about an awareness and solidarity among the various expressions of independent working class political action occurring nationally. This would contribute to the crystallization and shaping of this movement into a conscious and popular political trend. Such a trend can help to foster a mass consensus for the formation of an independent, mass-based working class political party.

A political party which emerges out of such a movement and which can unite the breadth of this movement as a national political force has the potential to mobilize the power of the working class and all of the oppressed throughout society. Such a party can restrict the maneuverability of corporate power, enact progressive social legislation, and serve to favorably alter the political balance of power needed to advance the many struggles for radical social change. As I have said, such a party cannot be built overnight. But we must do everything we can now, along the lines I have suggested, to help bring it into existence as soon as possible. □



## The Fourth International Faces the Turn of the Century

Continued from page 22

the theory of permanent revolution is of questionable validity, that the Leninist analysis of imperialism may have limited practical relevance, that the Transitional Program is an historical curiosity, that the political independence of the working class can be advanced by "tactically" supporting certain "progressive bourgeois" candidate, and that in our incredibly fluid world a pragmatist approach to politics is more appropriate than the utilization of traditional Marxist perspectives. This does not describe the program of any particular current inside the FI, but rather suggests the variety of questions that are surfacing in discussions among Fourth Internationalists. The Fourth International as a whole continues to represent a continuity with the heritage of Trotskyism. But the discussion in preparation for the upcoming World Congress (presently scheduled for 1994) has just opened up.

### Varieties of Regroupment

There are changes that should obviously be made in Section 1 of the FI statutes if it were being rewritten today. The use of "scientific planning" to provide "material abundance" would now be integrated with the need for sensitivity to and preservation of the environment. The stirring but gender-biased call for "the brotherhood of man" would now undoubtedly be replaced by a call for a free and equal community of people, animated by a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood.

There is another change that some FI members would also insist upon. This involves the following assertion: "The aim of every national section is to become a mass revolutionary Marxist party capable of guiding the class struggle within the country to a successful conclusion in a socialist victory." Implied here is a notion of FI sections seeking to function as "small mass parties," seeing themselves as the nucleus whose program and leadership will eventually attract tens of thousands of adherents (and more, ultimately) capable of making a socialist revolution. This approach is embraced by some in the Fourth International but is questioned, in some cases rejected outright, by others.

We have seen, for example, that in Brazil Fourth Internationalists do not compete with the Workers Party for leadership in the class struggle. Instead, they work with other revolutionaries inside the Workers Party (which is not likely to become a section of the FI) to help that organization become capable of guiding the class struggle

to a socialist conclusion. Similarly, in Italy a relatively healthy section of the Fourth International became part of a mass far-left group (Proletarian Democracy), which later merged into an even larger left-wing split-off from the degenerating Italian Communist Party. The Italian FI comrades are now playing an active role in presenting their ideas within, and helping to build, this mass workers' formation, known as Communist Refoundation.

A very different form of regroupment is represented by the experiences in Germany and Spain, where FI sections more or less dissolved themselves in order to join together with larger ex-Maoist groups that were by no means mass workers' parties. This regroupment conception — the merging together of various far-left groups of diminished size and morale — has been sharply challenged by some Fourth Internationalists. For some, a major sticking point is seen as the loss of formal affiliation to the FI; others express concern over what they see as a disturbing programmatic dilution or even liquidation. Defenders of such regroupment efforts have responded that the critics are disoriented by a narrow organizational "FI fetishism" and/or by a "programmatically" dogmatism.

Yet another form of regroupment has been urged by a small number of FI adherents — the coming together of all forces in the world which claim to be Trotskyist. This can be understood in at least two ways. First of all, some supporters of the Fourth International in one or another country (for example, in the United States, in Mexico, in Germany, in Sri Lanka) are not in a common organization because of sharp differences on immediate

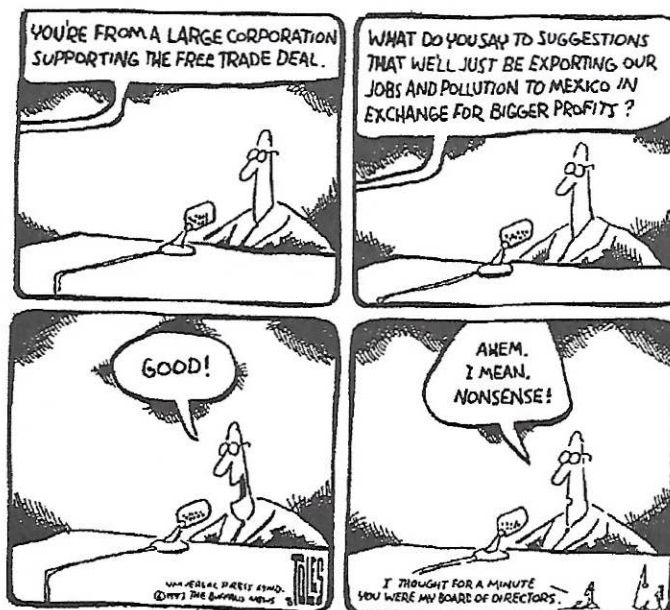
political perspectives. It is certainly reasonable for such divided forces to maintain comradely relations with each other while they test their counterposed orientations in the class struggle, with a commitment to reuniting when that is possible; disunity among Fourth Internationalists seriously weakens our movement in many ways.

But a few "Trotskyist unity" advocates go further, calling for unity between forces that are committed to the FI with other forces that are outside of and hostile to the Fourth International. Many argue against this, noting that this could generate sterile infighting among forces that have a more or less common "Trotskyist" jargon yet quite divergent politics. Self-described Trotskyists outside of the FI are capable of making important and positive contributions, yet some are also capable of being destructively sectarian. The value of one's politics must ultimately be judged by what one actually does, independently of specific ideological labels.

### Preparing for Struggles of the 21st Century

This is a period which requires intensified discussion and debate over how best to utilize our theories in order to analyze the world around us, over how best to develop programmatic approaches to change the world around us, and over how best to regroup revolutionary activists and working-class militants who are prepared to engage in such work. Such discussion and debate will be unfolding within the ranks of the Fourth International over the coming period. This demonstrates the continued vitality of our world movement.

What is essential is that honest debates among revolutionaries help us to better understand the dramatically changing realities of our time and help prepare us for the decisive struggles that will unfold in the 21st century. This is far more important than scoring points in polemics, and far more important than factional flags and organizational labels. There is a need for deepened understanding of what is happening in the world and what we can do to advance the interests of the workers and the oppressed. There is a greater need than ever for helping to build durable organizations, movements, and struggles to turn such understanding into a powerful tool for transforming reality. These are the tasks which must be shouldered by the revolutionaries of the Fourth International. □



# Why We Oppose U.S./UN Intervention in Haiti

*Continued from page 7*

of a multinational force sanctioned by the United Nations, in the framework of the New World Order. Among their tasks: the "reorganization, professionalization, and training of the Armed Forces of Haiti and the monitoring of their performance." The international police experts' responsibilities include assisting the lawful authorities in recruiting, organizing, and training the Civilian Police Force, the immediate establishment of an Academy and a School of Police, and the monitoring of civilian police performance.

Some progressive-thinking people still harbor illusions that "U.S.-trained" must mean "more professional, more humane." In reality, U.S. training will be used to repress the popular movement more effectively. For instance, Michel François, the current chief of police of Port-au-Prince (where hundreds of political killings have been attributed to the police), was trained at Fort Benning, Georgia, at the School of the Americas. This is where tens of thousands of Latin American and Caribbean military officers are taught the latest professional counter-insurgency techniques, including torture. The current elite detachment of U.S. soldiers being sent to Somalia was also trained at Fort Benning.

The most recent army professionalization program was that in El Salvador. According to Fr. Roy Bourgeois, of Catholic Worker, who compared the list of Salvadoran officers condemned by the UN's Truth Commission report against a list of Salvadoran graduates from Fort Benning, 45 of the 78 officers named were "professionalized" at the School of the Americas (SOA):

- The massacre of the Jesuits (November 16, 1989) — 27 officers cited by the UN Truth Commission, 19 School of the Americas graduates.
- The El Mozote massacre (December 1981) — 12 officers cited, 8 SOA graduates
- The murder of 4 church women (December 1980) — 5 officers cited, 3 SOA graduates.

The point must be stressed that the U.S. has already trained, "professionalized," and aided much of the Haitian army and police, which, in addition to serving as death squads, is today running an enormous trade in cocaine "that experts estimate brings in \$500 million or more a year," according to the *New York Times* (April 23, 1993).

Officially the new UN "professionalization" of the armed forces and police will include engineers and instructors under a command structure appointed by the UN secretary general and approved by the Security Council. This will include 500-600 troops (to start with), 50-60 instructors, and approximately 500 engineers and construction experts.

## Forced Consent

I think our mission in Vietnam is very clear. We are there at the request of the South Vietnamese government to *provide training*. (Emphasis added.) — U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, March 15, 1962 (After his Vietnam service, McNamara was president of the World Bank, 1968–1981.)

Who will the U.S. instructors and experts be? The experience of Guantanamo is instructive.

In early 1992, Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) intelligence officer Gunther Wagner was dispatched to Guantanamo to oversee the screening of Haitian refugees. Among his achievements: Informing INS asylum officers that 95 percent of Haitian asylum claims were fraudulent. If Haitians don't "look you in the eye," he told them, that should affect the "determination" of their claims. Wagner was also dispatched to Haiti to examine whether refugees forcibly returned by the U.S. were being persecuted, as many have testified. Contrary to overwhelming evidence of brutality and murder, he reported no abuses were occurring.

Wagner became a "human rights abuse expert" for the U.S. government. He was originally recruited by the U.S. Army's security police out of post-World War II occupied Germany, where he had served in Hitler's army. He was posted to Vietnam in 1966 as the senior public safety adviser under USAID's Office of Public Safety. That agency, created by the CIA in 1955, trained the South Vietnamese national police, which arrested, tortured, and murdered tens of thousands of people. In 1971, Wagner moved on to Managua as senior public safety adviser to the Somoza dictatorship. He later stayed on with Somoza in an "unofficial" capacity. In the 1980s, Wagner headed the Krome Detention Center, an Immigration Service prison outside of Miami, which has been condemned by international human rights observers for brutalities committed against internees, especially Haitian refugees.

Whether from Canada, Venezuela, or the U.S., it will be "experts" like Gunther Wagner who will be brought to Haiti to train and "professionalize" the Haitian army and police. If Canadian, will be the "trainers" be members of fascist and racist organizations like those who murdered Somalians and who are now on trial in Canada? If Venezuelan, will they be the troops who slaughtered more than 1,000 people during protests of price increases in Venezuela in 1989? Or perhaps those who launched two attempted coups in the last year?

The accord ties President Aristide's return to the deployment of such U.S./UN military "advisers," who in the name of "professionalization" will work to protect Haiti's brutal, corrupt power structure by keeping the Haitian people down, controlling Aristide, and

protecting the "defactors" — the death squads, drug dealers, and putschists. It is clear that the United Nations, which brokered the accord, is a surrogate for U.S. policy objectives.

The accord's fifth point, for instance, calls for "technical and financial assistance" in administrative, judicial, legislative, and military affairs. Secretary of State Warren Christopher has spoken of the likelihood that as many as 1,000 troops and a horde of "technical advisers" will be sent by the U.S. to Haiti. These will ensure that:

- the repressive machinery is "modernized" to repress the people more efficiently and with less noise. This will include tens of millions of dollars to "modernize" the Haitian Army (along with the "modernization" of a few generals' bank accounts) and the establishment of a new police force "with the presence of United Nations personnel."
- the Haitian economy remains dependent on the U.S., the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank, and that public education, financial institutions, and what there is of a health care system are privatized. (AIDS programs, for example, have been disbanded.)
- government is controlled by the economic elite and policies shaped to allow U.S. investors maximum power and profit.
- the unions, professional associations, student groups, peasant cooperatives, and political parties are coopted or smashed.

We wholly reject the U.S./UN's assumed right to dictate Haiti's future. The accord was presented — on Governor's Island [in New York City], a U.S. military base, not even at the United Nations! — without consultation with the legitimate government of Haiti (let alone the popular organizations) on a "take it or leave it" basis by UN mediator Dante Caputo. The arrogant UN mediator threatened to immediately lift the UN embargo if Aristide did not sign on the spot. Aristide was besieged by telephone calls from Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Vice President Al Gore, and members of Congress, bullying the Haitian president to sign, mixed with threats to withdraw their "support" for Aristide. The *New York Times* (August 3, 1993) reported that UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali told Aristide: "Don't examine it; just sign it." And UN and U.S. officials continued to pressure President Aristide to personally appear before the Haitian Assembly to plead for it to "invite" U.S./UN troops.

## The Alternative: Support the Popular Movement in Haiti

To accomplish its economic and political control of Haiti, the upcoming U.S./UN military intervention and occupation must neutralize the popular movement. It plans to do that by assisting, not dismantling, the Haitian military, which the US sees as merely "out of control." Even the

Congressional Black Caucus has fallen into that trap, proposing "equipment, supplies, and transportation" for a large international military force under the auspices of the UN and the OAS to serve as "protection" for President Aristide. Others have proposed millions of dollars for such items as "riot gear" for the "reformed" Haitian military.

There is an alternative: support the popular movement, and don't allow the devastating situation — brought about in great part by U.S. policy — to be used as a justification for foreign intervention, under the racist pretext that Haitians cannot govern themselves. This policy is part of the U.S. government's New World Order — a variation on the Monroe Doctrine, but now being enforced globally under cover of the United Nations. It has as little interest in "protecting" Aristide as in allowing Haitian workers to organize into unions and other grassroots organizations and determining for themselves their own destiny.

The Haitian people are emphatically opposed to this new colonialization scheme. The popular movement's goals, which include uprooting foreign domination (for example, factories which pay slave wages) and creating a just society for all Haitians through literacy, agrarian reform, health care, and collective organizing, threaten Washington's aim of maintaining a cheap-labor climate for foreign corporations.

## U.S. Out of Somalia — No Intervention in Haiti or Cuba!

*Continued from page 6*

sible that Aidid could play a role like that of the Philippine general Emilio Aguinaldo, who resisted U.S. occupation of his country for two years after the Spanish-American war, if not like that of Gen. Augusto Sandino, who successfully fought the U.S. Marine invaders of Nicaragua in the 1920s.)

"Somalis in the capital [Mogadishu] detest the UN," reported the October 6 *Monitor*, adding that "the blue UN helmet has become a target." The 15,000 "well-armed and armored" UN troops are "pinned down in fortified compounds behind coils of razor wire" and "rarely venture onto the streets where snipers lie in wait." Retired Admiral Jonathan Howe, the U.S. special envoy to the UN in Somalia and the man who has directed the bloody search operations and helicopter massacres, is especially hated. Painted graffiti in the poor districts of Mogadishu say: "Animal Howe, Go Home." The UN headquarters, an 80-acre complex that was formerly the U.S. embassy, is called by Somalis, "The home of the people with the blood on their hands."

Not just UN troops but Americans in particular are viewed as hated invaders. The *Monitor* reported that a U.S. pilot was killed recently in a northern Kenyan town near the Somali border. He was killed by a Somali simply "because he was American." The Somali

Leaders of the popular movement have spoken out sharply against the Governor's Island accord. Chavannes Jean-Baptiste, for instance, a founder of the Peasant Movement of Papay (MPP), Haiti's largest peasant movement and a participant in the negotiations as part of President Aristide's Presidential Commission, questioned the will of the international community to actually help resolve the crisis: "Rather than demanding the coup leaders' departure from power, the OAS/UN negotiations have legitimized the defactos [the popular movement's term for those who illegitimately seized power] by making them equal players at the negotiation table." Chavannes went on: "We could say that this accord is not between the constitutional government and the military delegation. Rather, it is an accord between the UN, the OAS, and the 'ally' nations of the secretary general. They conceived this accord according to their own plan and imposed it on the two parties."

The National Popular assembly (APN) referred to the accord as "a ploy to make the Haitian people swallow the criminal coup d'etat of Raoul Cedras." A spokesperson for the Collective for the University and Democracy (CUD) said that the accord as presented to Aristide was "totally unacceptable," adding: "We demand the immediate departure of the army's high command and the elected chief of police."

was "the son of a man killed during a daylight raid by American helicopters on July 12."

The situation in Haiti is somewhat different. There, it is not a question of drilling rights or strategic location near the oil-rich Middle East. America's rulers have long regarded the Caribbean as their private pool, an exclusive preserve for money-making operations at the expense of the people who live there. (The accompanying article on Haiti gives much of the historical background to the present crisis.)

The overwhelming majority of Haitians, the poor and oppressed, voted three years ago for Jean-Bertrand Aristide, whose government they hoped would end the decades of domination by pro-U.S. military dictators. Within a year, in September 1991, the U.S.-trained Haitian military and police ousted Aristide, and Washington began a charade, with cooperation by the Organization of American States and the UN, of imposing sanctions on Haiti and pressuring the gunmen in power to let Aristide return.

An agreement was finally reached this year (described in the accompanying article) for Aristide to return to Haiti, with limited powers and accompanied by U.S./UN forces that are hardly likely to be a force for democracy.

But even this shabby arrangement was too much for the death-squad drug-dealer Haitian junta. They fear that Aristide's mere presence

The MPP/MPNK states: "Our position on military intervention is steadfast. It will never change. We stand against all forms of military intervention. We recognize that the country has always been under foreign domination in all aspects and are determined to fight against this.

"We urge all North American NGOs [non-governmental organizations], and all other progressive organizations in the world, to continue their solidarity with the Haitian people and fight against this imperialist ploy [which tries to] preserve the September coup."

### In Conclusion: Self-Determination for Haiti

We in the U.S. must use all means to fight U.S./UN intervention and possible occupation. Real democracy cannot be imported; it is not a top-down experiment. The people of Haiti demand more than U.S.-style democracy; they want a new society that will guarantee their basic right to justice, human rights, and self-determination. This prospect is anathema to the established privileges of the Haitian kleptocracy and their sponsors in Washington. It is the prospect of self-determination, as evident in the original popular support for President Aristide, now carried on by the popular movement, that the U.S. government fears and we must support. □

in Haiti might result in a new mobilization of the popular forces. That could do serious harm to the military and police dictatorship which rules in the interests of a tiny pro-U.S. Haitian oligarchy.

The U.S. government wants to maintain the appearance of "being for democracy," but it doesn't want to risk the outbreak of another popular revolution in the Caribbean. All sorts of U.S. corporate interests are hurt by revolutions, as the Cuban experience showed them. But the American people have nothing to fear from the Haitian people's struggle to determine their own destiny. Or that of the Cubans either. Or of the Somalis. None of these terribly poor countries is a military or economic threat to the U.S. As one opponent of intervention put it, "What are they going to do? Throw bicycles at us?"

The same corporations in this country that are breaking strikes, locking out workers, driving down living standards, cutting back social services are the ones behind the policy of intervention in Somalia and Haiti and the blockade of Cuba. We need a massive march on Washington to demand: U.S. Out of Somalia. No U.S. Intervention in Haiti. End the Blockade of Cuba! □

*Evelyn Sell and Lee DeNoyer contributed to this article.*

## WOSA and Socialism

*Continued from page 20*

the wake of the next major crisis of the world capitalist system.”<sup>34</sup> Events in Eastern Europe have driven home the lesson once and for all that it is impossible to build and sustain socialism in one country “unless some of the major capitalist countries themselves take the socialist road.” One has only to observe how socialist revolutions are isolated and destabilized one after the other by the major imperialist powers, particularly the United States of America, to realize that it is necessary for some of the major capitalist economies to break loose from the world capitalist economy “before the transition to a world socialist system can take place.”<sup>35</sup>

In Southern Africa WOSA is facing the urgent task of uniting and coordinating all the anticapitalist forces in this region that must play a major role in the coming war “between capital and labor, between the barbarism of the world capitalist system and the socialist future of human civilization.”<sup>36</sup> This is clearly a task of the first magnitude that can only be successfully executed by revolutionary socialists, who will need all the solidarity and concrete support they can get from their international socialist allies. The founders of the organization were well aware of this awesome and Herculean task and could not have expressed it better when they concluded in the Founding Resolution of the Workers’ Organization for Socialist Action that:

Internationalism is a fundamental principle of socialism, since capitalism is an international system. Consequently, socialism cannot be built in one country. The struggle for socialism is therefore a worldwide struggle in which the organization recognizes that its struggle is

linked to the struggles of oppressed and exploited people throughout the world and commits itself to support and defend working-class organizations in all countries.<sup>37</sup>

### Footnotes

1. “Politics and Perspectives of the Workers’ Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA),” pp. 3–4, author’s possession.
2. Allison Drew, “Social Mobilization and Racial Capitalism in South Africa, 1928–60,” a Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, p. 178.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 214.
4. *Ibid.*
5. “Programme of the Workers’ Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA),” p. 2, author’s possession.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
7. “Constitution of the Workers’ Organisation for Socialist Action,” author’s possession.
8. *Ibid.*
9. “Programme of the Workers’ Organisation for Socialist Action,” p. 8.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 13–14.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
13. “Politics and Perspectives of the Workers’ Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA),” p. 3.
14. “Negotiations in South Africa/Azania,” *Workers’ Voice* [journal of the Workers’ Organisation for Socialist Action], No. 1, August 1990, p. 16.
15. “Interview with WOSA Secretariat,” *Workers’ Voice*, No. 1, August 1990, p. 19.
16. “Politics and Perspectives of the Workers’ Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA),” p. 5.
17. “The Situation in South Africa/Azania,” *OSAAL News*, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 12.
18. *Vukani Basebenzi* [the newspaper of WOSA], No. 7, November 1991, p. 7.
19. “Negotiations,” *Frontline Worker* (journal “for a Socialist Movement in South Africa”), No. 3, January, 1991, p. 7.
20. “The Politics of Negotiations,” *Workers’ Voice* Occasional Pamphlet No. 2, November 1991, p. 2.
21. “Interview with WOSA Secretariat,” *Workers’ Voice*, No. 1, August 1990, p. 18.
22. “The National Situation in South Africa/Azania,” *OSAAL News*, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 12.
23. “Politics and Perspectives of the Workers’ Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA),” p. 5.
24. “The National Situation in South Africa/Azania,” *OSAAL News*, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 14.
25. *Vukani Basebenzi*, No. 7, November 1991, p. 6.
26. *Ibid.*
27. “Politics and Perspectives of the Workers’ Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA),” p. 6.
28. “Founding Resolution of the Workers’ Organisation for Socialist Action,” *Frontline Worker*, No. 3, January 1991, p. 7.
29. *Vukani Basebenzi*, No. 8, February/March 1992, p. 6.
30. *Workers’ Voice* Occasional Pamphlet No. 1, October 1991, p. 26.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
32. “Constitution of the Workers’ Organisation for Socialist Action,” author’s possession.
33. “Programme of the Workers’ Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA),” p. 16.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
37. “Founding Resolution of the Workers’ Organisation for Socialist Action,” *Frontline Worker*, No. 3, January 1991, p. 7.

## A Report Back from Cuba

*Continued from page 8*

They have found a good fertilizer in sugar cane fiber to replace imported chemicals. In fact, Cuba is now using 120 products from sugar cane.

The high spirit of these contingents was expressed by one older Afro-Cuban woman we spoke with working in a kitchen. “How long are you here?” we asked. “I’m staying until the Special Period ends!” she answered.

Above all, Cuba is maintaining the values it established with the Revolution. Cuba still commits its resources to helping those most vulnerable. Despite the serious food situation, AIDS patients are still guaranteed a diet of 5,400 calories a day. The psychiatric hospital still has a full-time orchestra that plays in a pavilion for patients and live musicians to assist in psycho-ballet. Instead of dismissing cultural efforts as luxury, Cuba still devotes resources to institutions like Casa de las Americas, which nurtures not only Cuban artists but artists from throughout Latin

America and the Caribbean.

Human solidarity, generosity, an eagerness to provide everyone with a productive and spiritual life — these remain the standards of the Cuban Revolution.

This course was definitively approved in the last Cuban elections held a few months ago. Cuba changed its electoral methods to provide for direct election to the National Assembly and to assure nomination of candidates from the grassroots communities. Dissidents in Cuba and right-wingers in Miami turned the election into a referendum by mounting a strong campaign urging people to nullify their ballots (a democratic possibility we do not have in the United States). Despite their loud campaign, with more than 95 percent of the voters casting ballots, only 7 percent chose to nullify. The huge majority of Cubans voted “yes” for the revolutionary leadership and path.

As Sergio Lopez of the Cuban Institute for the Friendship of the Peoples explained,

“There is quite a difference between people who complain and who want to change the system. There are some who don’t share our socialist ideals, but when the gunboats come, they ask to help defend the island.”

The Cubans are doing everything possible to defend the Revolution against the New World Order. Olga Alonso, who formerly lived in Germany and saw what reunification meant, summarized the Cuban attitude very well. She described to me how many of her German friends from the Communist Party and government there had committed suicide in the face of reunification. “But we Cubans would never commit suicide. We will never give up fighting,” she said.

That should be our attitude as well. Here in the United States, we should organize solidarity and material aid. Most of all, we must recommit ourselves to doing all we can to protest, challenge, and end the criminal U.S. blockade. □

## The Need for a Mass Workers' Party

*Continued from page 16*

to conform to the dictates of capitalism and the market to preserve the system from economic and political stagnation and collapse. It can no longer be creative because it can no longer promote the democratic aspirations of the workers.

Whatever happened to the Constituent Assembly? Has it disappeared into the twilight of the sunset clauses? The nationalists claim still to stand and even to "fight" for the social demands of the workers. Hence they say they will deliver semi-free education and semi-free health for all, lots and lots of sport and recreation for all, and so forth. Except for the very last item, perhaps, those who know the

history of post-colonial Africa and have some sense of the global economic situation know that this is at best wishful thinking, at worst callous electioneering.

In short, an independent mass workers' party is essential to promote the interests of the working class in South Africa, where those interests are being sacrificed in the most public way imaginable on the altar of political expediency.

The SACP, caught in a strategic trap, in spite of its history and legitimacy, cannot now consistently promote workers' interests. It is too realistic for this and it fears becoming a mere "opposition" or even being "marginalized." It prefers a slice of the capitalist cake,

even if it has only one or two ministers to take office (not power) in the government of national unity.

I have no doubt that comrades in the SACP who are not convinced that the ANC can be transformed into a "mass socialist party" will join the movement to build an independent mass democratic workers' party, one that would contain within itself the right to tendencies and platforms. Such a party will be one of the vehicles that will accommodate the shift away from nationalism toward the socialist alternatives. □

## South Africa Today and Tomorrow

*Continued from page 17*

elements of an historic tragedy are being prepared. In the immediate political perspective, the constitutional details about important matters such as proportional representation, federalism, confederalism, or regionalism, sunset clauses, etc., loom large, and make some people excited and others depressed. In fact, however, these are secondary issues even though they represent struggles between different strata of the middle-class elites to set the beacons for future developments. In the longer-term historical perspective, it is the profound social changes that are taking place that really matter, phenom-

ena such as the large-scale organization and proletarianization of South Africa's population, the Africanization of our cities and our culture, chronic unemployment with all its negative social spin-offs, the destruction of our living environment, changes in language usage, the feminization of large sectors of South African society. These are the vectors of the new South Africa. It is there, rather than the prompt-sheets of the World Trade Centre on which the choreography of the next 20 to 30 years is to be found.

While there is no doubt that important changes for the better have come about since February 1990, the overwhelming majority

of our people have not been the beneficiaries of these changes. Instead, they have been victims of the partly unintended consequences of those changes. For these reasons, the struggle will continue with greater intensity, the soporific aims of the mainstream media notwithstanding. The hope for a better future is to be found in the continuation of our struggle for social justice and equality of opportunity, not in the tactical maneuvers of the horse-trading elites. □

June 21, 1993

## The Transitional Program (excerpts)

*Continued from page 25*

came into being, and it seemed that the workers might take power. Instead the ferment was channeled into a 1936 electoral coalition which resulted in a Popular Front government — composed of the SFIO under Léon Blum, the PCF under Maurice Thorez, and a small liberal-capitalist Radical Party under Edouard Daladier. The government, led by Blum, carried out some social reforms but made numerous compromises with liberal-capitalist elements, dampened popular enthusiasm, and then fell in 1938, giving way to a Radical Party government led by Daladier (which overturned many of the 1936 reforms). See Jacques Danos and Marcel Gibelin, *June '36, Class Struggle and the Popular Front in France* (London: Bookmarks, 1986). Also see: *Leon Trotsky on France*, edited by David Salner (New York: Monad Press, 1979), and Leon Trotsky, *The Crisis of the French Section (1935–36)*, edited by Naomi Allen and George Breitman (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977).

4. The Phrygian cap refers to the liberty cap of the French Republic; the swastika, of course, to the mystical Nordic symbol utilized by the extreme fascistic Nazi (or "National-Socialist") movement led by Adolf Hitler. A classic Trotskyist-influenced analysis of German and Italian fascism is Daniel Guérin's *Fascism and Big Business* (New York: Monad Books/Pathfinder Press, 1973); although R. Palme Dutt's *Fascism and Social Revo-*

*lution* (New York: International Publishers, 1934) presents a documented analysis, marred by the influence of Stalinism, it nonetheless offers much of interest. Also see Franz Neumann's classic, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933–1944* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), and Michael N. Dobkowski and Isidor Wallimann, eds., *Radical Perspectives on the Rise of Fascism in Germany, 1919–1945* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989). An invaluable memoir by a participant in the German workers' movement in the period leading up to, spanning, and following Nazi rule is Oskar Hippe's *And Red is the Color of Our Flag* (London: Index Books, 1991), which also provides information on German Trotskyism and thoughtful analyses of German realities from World War I to the 1970s. Also see Leon Trotsky, *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, edited by George Breitman and Merry Maisel (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971).

5. Two useful studies on this phenomenon are: Peter Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism, Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), and Carl E. Schorske, *German Social Democracy, 1905–1917* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1955).

6. On the Second International, for a Social Democratic account, see: Julius Braunthal, *History of the International, 1914–1943*, 2 vols. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), and *History of the*

*International, World Socialism, 1943–1968* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1980); for a Stalinist account, see J. Lenz, *The Rise and Fall of the Second International* (New York: International Publishers, 1932); and for a brief academic account, see James Joll, *The Second International, 1889–1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975).

On the Third International, for a Trotskyist-influenced account, see C.L.R. James, *World Revolution, 1917–1936: The Rise and Fall of the Communist International* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1993); for a Stalinist account, William Z. Foster, *History of the Three Internationals, The World Socialist and Communist Movements From 1848 to the Present* (New York: International Publishers, 1955); for a scholarly account by a former Communist, see Fernando Claudin, *The Communist Movement, From Comintern to Cominform*, 2 vols. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975).

On the Fourth International, see: Pierre Frank, *The Fourth International: The Long March of the Trotskyists* (London: Ink Links, 1979); Tom Barrett, ed. *Fifty Years of the Fourth International* (New York: Fourth Internationalist Tendency, 1990); Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism, 1929–1985: A Documented Analysis of the Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992).

# Letters

## Appeal from United Mine Workers

The following letter was received from the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), District 28, P.O. Box 28, Castlewood, Virginia 24224.

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

We as members of United Mine Workers of America are calling for help in our battle with the Coal Companies. The strikers of our organization need your financial help and participation in this ongoing battle.

The most important issue in this battle is job security. The Union has to stop Coal Companies from double-breasting [hiring nonunion labor at subsidiary companies]. The future of our organization is at stake. Along with your support and financial help, we will be successful.

As you know, there are tremendous costs incurred during a strike of this size, such as sponsoring rallies and protests and printing posters, stickers, leaflets, etc., but maybe the biggest expense is legal costs that arise frequently. So, any donation you can make would be greatly appreciated.

All donations should be made to:  
Region II Solidarity Fund  
4500 MacCorkle Ave., S.E.  
Charleston, WV 25304  
Phone: 304-925-6917

We would be honored to attend local meetings or rallies to help get our message out to other unions.

*Solidarity,  
James Gibbs*

## On Black Nationalism

In his "Reply on Black Nationalism" (No.110), Steve Bloom takes me to task for "misunderstanding what [he] had to say" on the subject of "Black Nationalism in the U.S. today." However, for anyone who took the trouble to read "Black Liberation and Socialist Revolution in Today's America: Movementism or Marxism" (No. 107), it should be clear that it is Steve who is guilty of the misunderstanding: of what I actually said, in particular, and of what, in his words, "should be obvious to anyone with even a cursory familiarity with the Black community today," in general. Both aspects flow from a false understanding of the Black struggle and a desperate desire to cling to theories which have failed to stand the test of time.

Steve accuses me of "believing that Black Nationalism...represents the politics of a Black middle class trying to secure its own position in competition with white and other middle-class elements." Having set up this straw man, he then proceeds to knock it down with "what should be obvious..." What I actually stated was that,

what Steve, in his desire to have something to "unconditionally support" (i.e., tail after), "choose[s] to dub as 'the Black movement' is in fact the movement of that section of the Black middle class that has gotten the smallest pieces of the pie and has thus been the least integrated into American capitalism." I go on to say that while "the mainstream of the Black middle class is... far more powerful...today than it was in the 1960s and... has moved to the right along with the rest of property-owning America...rabble-rousers and street demagogues like...Sharpton and...Farrakhan and even smaller fry storefront nationalists... want into the system and not its overthrow."

Steve himself asserts that "there are Black academics, cultural and religious nationalists...whose ideologies involve carving out a personal place for themselves — without truly confronting the capitalist state and its economic dominance..." So at first glance, it would appear that Steve and I are speaking the same language. But only at first glance. Since Steve's overriding aim is to prove that all manifestations of the Black struggle are "nationalist" and an expression of "self-determination," he is quick to add that "it is quite incorrect to assert...that this is the sum total of nationalist sentiment in the community today and...that nothing else is possible." Surely, if "nationalism" was as synonymous with the "Black movement" as Steve asserts it is, he could name at least one organization or Black leader that embodies these "currents." Instead, all he can do is assure us that "more radical and more political nationalist currents do exist."

However, "nationalist sentiment" is not one and the same thing "as the more articulated program and worldview...propounded by political organizations and leaders that consider themselves...nationalists... [and] one can...sympathize with the former without adapting to the latter." For his part, Steve must continue to "adopt new meanings for old terminology" in order to cover his tracks.

The "new meanings" for "nationalism" used by Steve do not alter the fact that the Black "community" remains divided into classes with different interests and social layers expressed by varying ideologies and that petty-bourgeois nationalist groupings and representatives intend to prevent the working class from organizing itself under the pretext of "community" interests. In his rush to "unconditionally support whatever...demands emerge from the Black community" Steve thus winds up giving it to "those class forces that are in the saddle and formulating the demands." That being the same "academics [and] cultural and religious nationalists" he mentioned earlier.

Of course, if one really believes that "the specific forms of revolutionary struggle that must emerge in the U.S...will be two separate struggles with separate dynamics," with the latter being "democratic," i.e. bourgeois, insofar as the "Black community" is concerned, then "unconditional support" for this milieu indeed has "coherence." However, the "coherence" of this separate-but-equal stageism certainly has little to do with "Trotskyism."

Since in his eyes, Black liberation and nationalism are one and the same, "we can hardly expect to play any role...if we stand opposed to nationalism on principle." If this were really the case in general, how was it that in those revolutions that combined national-democratic with proletarian-socialist tasks the communists were able to triumph since they stood opposed to the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalists *in practice on the other side of the barricades*. By Steve's logic, Tito, Mao, Ho Chi Minh, and Castro, let alone the Bolsheviks, should have been "treat[ed]...with contempt" for not being consistent enough nationalists. Fortunately, the workers and peasants of the countries concerned displayed far better sense than Steve appears capable of.

As Peter Johnson has pointed out, there exists no Black nation in the U.S. today and therefore no possibility of "self-determination." Not only is "the majority of the American working class today...made up of Blacks, Latinos, Asians, and women [but] the living standards of all these workers have been undergoing a steady decline...[Thus,] there exists a real basis...for a multi-racial working class fightback...a key component (of which) must be the fight against...racism if white workers...hope to gain the trust and collaboration of Blacks in any kind of common struggle..." Such common struggles have not been unknown to the American working class, as the experience of the Communist Party in the 1930s illustrates. That is why we continue to believe that "Trotskyists should be intervening in those struggles to the extent that that is possible and be vying for the leadership of them by proving the validity of their program in practice," for as Steve himself points out, "the role of conscious revolutionary Marxists...can be crucial" in the process.

If the past is any indicator of the present, let alone the future, we can be sure that in "any genuine and serious current of radical Blacks," there will be those, who, like Malcolm X, the Black Panthers, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, and the Revolutionary Union Movements before them, will be searching for a way out of the dead end of nationalism and moving toward socialism. Unfortunately, the "aid and assistance" that Steve Bloom has to offer will make their finding that destination far more difficult.

*Roy Rollin  
New York City*

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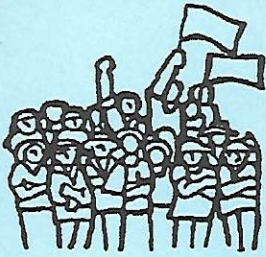
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# The Manifesto of the Fourth International

## Socialism or Barbarism on the Eve of the Twenty-First Century

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The FI is an international organization of revolutionary Marxist parties and groups from dozens of countries throughout the world. It was founded in 1938 under the leadership of Leon Trotsky, dedicated to a consistent and forthright struggle for the common interests of working people and the oppressed in all nations — to their mobilization in struggle against capitalist exploitation, colonialism, and bureaucratic dictatorship, and against all forms of racial and sexual discrimination.

It should be clear, from the perspectives presented here, that the FI remains true to that purpose today. This, in itself, stands as a major accomplishment in a world where many former leftists and radical activists are rushing to embrace the "new realism" of a capitalism that has supposedly "triumphed over socialism" during the cold war.

But reality is a far cry from the "new world order" proclaimed by U.S. President George Bush after his victory against Iraq in 1991. It is, as the Manifesto points out, a world of increasing disorder — of insecurity, crisis, preventable hunger, poverty, and disease. These things are more the rule than the exception for most of the billions of people on this planet.

In short, we are living in a world that cries out for a renewed commitment to the fight for social change, for a more just and humane political and economic system. Just such a commitment, and a perspective on how those needed changes can be brought about, will be found in the pages of this pamphlet.

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